

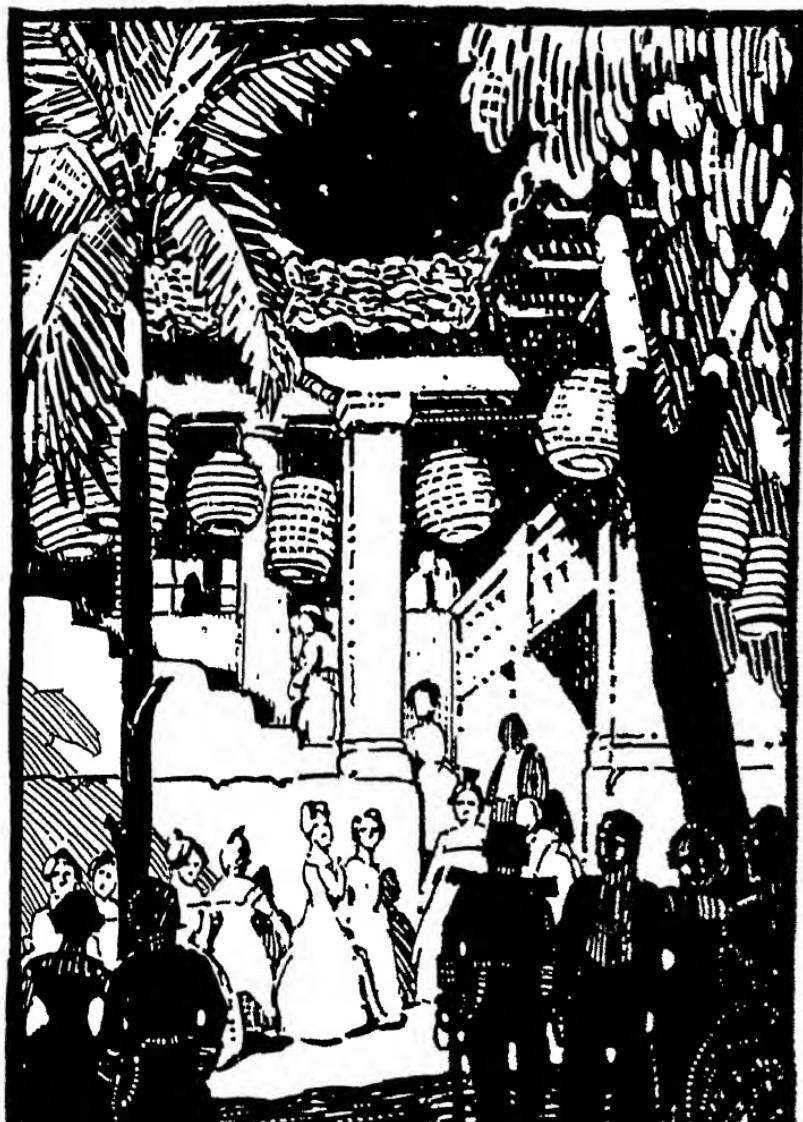
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TEMPEST OVER MEXICO



BELLA VISTA NIGHTS

CARROLL BILL

Tempest over MEXICO

A Personal Chronicle

BY

ROSA E. KING



Illustrated by **CARROLL BILL**

Boston
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1940

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Published July, 1935

Reprinted July, 1935

Reprinted October, 1935

Reprinted March, 1936

Reprinted October, 1936

Reprinted March, 1938

Reprinted August, 1940

THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY PRESS BOOKS
ARE PUBLISHED BY
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
IN ASSOCIATION WITH
THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY COMPANY

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

To the
COUNTRY WHICH IS MY HOME
and to the
PEOPLE WHO ARE MY NEIGHBORS

*this book is lovingly dedicated in the hope that
this experience of a foreigner may lead other for-
eigners to look with deeper insight on Mexico*

The author is particularly indebted to Miss Dorothy Conzelman, whose zeal and understanding were of such marked assistance in the preparation of this manuscript.

R. E. K.

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TEMPEST OVER MEXICO

"... They had lost their homes. I had lost mine. . . . We were all in the way of losing our lives because we had loved this town and lived there. . . . As I moved about, trying to help, a kind of peace came over me. I was like a skater who has been struggling to stand and suddenly finds his balance. I no longer felt alone, apart. Distinctions of nationality, race, class, meant nothing now. I was with these people. I was one of them."



PROLOGUE

IT was the ninth of June, 1910. There was a stir in the ancient town of Cuernavaca, the capital of the State of Morelos, which lies in a sheltered valley some hundred kilometres from Mexico City. This was the Saturday evening set for the formal opening of my hotel, the Bella Vista. For months I had had men at work remodeling the lovely 400-year-old structure, once the manor house of a great *hacienda*. Now all was ready, and my servants were straightening for the hundredth time the chairs that stood in the *portal*, the arcaded verandah opening on the street, and sweeping nonexistent particles of dust from the stones of the patio in the midst of the house, where the old Colonial fountain bubbled and roses and tropical vines climbed to the second-floor gallery.

In my great drawing-room upstairs, Don Pablo Escandon, the governor of the state, cocked his head to one side and sighted down his aristocratic nose at one of the potted palms. "Move it three inches to

the left, Carlos," he said finally, to the Indian boy at his elbow.

I was standing beside them in what is known as a state of mind, clutching a sheaf* of telegrams and letters. The matter of the palm settled, Don Pablo turned to me placatingly. "Now, what if they are all reserving rooms, *Señora King!* Is n't that what you want?" He turned his attention once more to the room. "Yes, it is all very fine," he said to himself, with a sort of personal pride; for it was he who had urged me on to this enterprise. "The mosaic floor and the stately doorways and the flowers in their great urns . . . it is like the fine hotels at the watering places in Europe." He snapped the switches so that all the lights went on, the three great clusters over the grand piano and the reading and writing tables, and the hundred tiny lights set round the ceiling.

"Remember, *señora*, you are to wear your best dress, and the earrings; and, if you like, I will receive with you. Everyone of importance in our little provincial city and its environs will come to-night, and many from Mexico City, since the papers have written so much about the new Bella Vista. . . . The English colony will come because you are an Englishwoman, and the Americans because they like what is new, and the Mexicans because it is the fashionable thing. . . ."

My memory of that evening is an intoxicating blur of lights, and music and perfume, — the perfume of

the flowers that were everywhere and the perfume on the women's hair,—and faces floating by in an endless stream. The place was filled with people. I had thought a few of my friends might come, but I had expected nothing like this. All the *élite* of the capital seemed to be there. I saw a cabinet minister talking with an ambassador; caught scraps of conversation, comments on my hotel. . . . "Charmant, *n'est-ce pas?* *Tout à fait mondain . . .*" "*Das ist aber schön . . .*" And the warm friendly words of those I knew better, "Ay, Señora King! *Que elegante, que precioso!*" . . . And the outrageous grin of an old friend, "Not bad, Rosita, not bad." Outside in the Zócalo, the little green plaza in front of my house, I saw the shadowy figures of the humbler people of the town who had gathered there in the darkness to watch the gayety.

"This is a great day for Cuernavaca," Don Pablo, the governor, had said. It was a great day for Rosa King, too. Gradually the crowd thinned out and only a few of my closest friends were left. I remember someone saying, "You had a triumph, Rosa. And everyone was glad. . . ." That was what made me happy, the feeling that all these people were glad for my good fortune and wished me well. It was by the friendliness and good will of these people that I, who had come to Cuernavaca a stranger, without capital and without business experience, had been able to build up the success represented by the Bella Vista.

I have begun with this because it is the heart of my story. It was the purchase of the Bella Vista that bound me irrevocably to Cuernavaca. If I had not bought the hotel, I should have been free to go at any time, and I should probably have left with the other foreigners when the Revolutionary troubles began. As it was, when I invested everything I had in the Bella Vista, I cast in my fortunes with the town; and from that time on everything that happened to Mexico was bound to happen to me also.



CHAPTER I

I FIRST came to Cuernavaca in 1905, in the days when only a cobblestone trail and a primitive railway with wood-burning engines led over the range of mountains that separates the Valley of Morelos, where Cuernavaca lies, from the Valley of Mexico. I came with my husband from our home in Mexico City, eager to see the beauty and richness of this famous valley which, for a thousand years, had been deeply loved and fiercely coveted. Our heads were full of gay plans. My husband vowed we should ride on burros across the ravines or *barrancas* to the village of San Anton, where we should find the Indian potters working with the same designs that Hernán Cortez saw four hundred years ago. "How funny our long British legs will look, dangling down the sides of the poor little donkeys!" I thought. Burros, luckily, are stronger than they look. . . . My husband said, "We will hire the old stagecoach that was used by the Emperor Maximilian and his lovely consort Carlota"; and we grew romantic over the vision

of ourselves driving in the track of those royal lovers through a flowering countryside.

Unhappily for our expectations, we had come at the end of the dry season. The vegetation was burnt and the whole valley obscured by clouds of choking dust. We did not stay long in Cuernavaca.

Two years later, however, I found myself once more on the train that puffed up the mountains. This time I was a woman alone, with my way to make, and two young children waiting in Mexico City, depending on me. I was coming to Cuernavaca to start a little business if I could — coming there not from choice, but because Cuernavaca was the only town accessible from Mexico City, where my friends and relatives lived.

As I felt the train pull harder up the peak, excitement rose in me in spite of myself. Not expectantly as before, but intently, I waited for the moment when we should cross the range. We were ten thousand feet high; clouds were all about us, feathery, white, isolating us completely from everything past and to come. Then suddenly we slipped out of the clouds and I saw below me the Valley of Morelos, lovelier than I had ever dreamed. The rains had come and torn away the curtains of dust, and everywhere was living green. There was such life in that valley that I could almost see the maize and sugar cane pushing up through the fertile earth. Men were working in the fields and great herds of cattle were grazing. The enormous buildings on the great es-

tates or *haciendas* had a kind of feudal air, built not for the years but for the centuries. In the heart of the valley, white-walled Cuernavaca glistened like a jewel beyond the wild *barranca* that protects it.

The train wound down through the quiet Indian villages that dot the foothills — clusters of thatch-roofed huts ablaze with bougainvillea, by little streams where women were washing. Everywhere the awkward stalks of banana trees swayed lazily in the breeze. A dark-skinned mother, her baby cradled on her back in the long blue scarf, the *rebozo*, that was knotted across her breast, walked close to the train; and the dignity of her bearing reminded me that here in these villages were to be found the true blue bloods of the nation. These Indians, aloof from the mixed bloods of the cities, were the descendants of the old Tlahuicas, who, masked with the heads of wolves and jaguars and armed only with sticks and arrows and slings, had for months defended their capital against Cortez and his swarming allies. I had heard that the Tlahuicas had never been dislodged from some of their mountain fastnesses, and as I looked back at the rugged range I could well believe it; and I felt that Cortez was a man indeed to dare that descent into hostile country.

And then I saw, above the clouds, the snow-touched peaks of the two volcanoes, the Mount That Smokes and the Sleeping Woman, and never had I seen beauty that moved me as theirs did. Ixtaccihuatl, the Sleeping Woman, shimmered like

a woman of marble, or a dead woman in her white shroud, lying with her head pillowed as on a couch. Beside and above her rose the spurred cone of Popocatépetl, who, the Indians say, loved her and killed her in his jealousy, and to this day vomits forth ashes, stone, and fire as warning not to come too near her. Looking that morning on those high and tragic peaks, a feeling of the great spans in which time was measured here came over me, and my own troubles seemed like a drop of water falling in the vastness of space.

I forgot that I was coming to Cuernavaca because I had to, and the zest for new places stirred in my blood. I had a fleeting remembrance of another arrival, in my earliest childhood — at Capetown, after a three months' voyage around South Africa, when we had been becalmed for weeks: I and my four brothers and sisters, with our noses pressed to the rail as the sailing vessel glided to the dock; behind us, our boy and girl parents, a string of nursemaids, and a mountain of baggage. We always traveled in this way, and we traveled all the time.

In those days, the days of Porfirio Díaz, railway stations were always built well outside the towns to leave room for the town to grow. As there was only one train a day to Cuernavaca there was much rivalry among the eight or ten cab drivers, who scrambled good-naturedly for fares. I climbed after my valises into the old-fashioned, high-wheeled victoria the porter selected for me, the driver jumped

on the box, and we were off at a gallop — lickety-split, downhill, my knees bumping against the valises. Beside and behind us clattered the other cabs; the daily race was on. My driver stood up and cracked his whip; our mules went like mad, the carriage lurching around the steep curves till I thought we should lose a wheel. Into town we thundered, bunched for the finish, scraping through the narrow streets with such a clatter on the cobblestones that windows flew open and heads craned out. Ahead was the little green plaza, the heart of every Mexican town, but our mules seemed bound for the next valley. Not so, however; they bunched their haunches, dug their hoofs in the ground, and skidded to a standstill; the carriage bumped once, mightily, and stopped. We had arrived, and on the cool deep verandah of the old inn Bella Vista the proprietor was waiting to greet me and show me to my room. I was charmed with the place, the thick, 400-year-old walls and flower-filled patio, the sleepy square outside, and the glorious view of the volcanoes from my windows.

After the long midday meal I set out to reexplore Cuernavaca, the town that was going to be my home, and it hardly seemed the same place I had visited before. That first time, through the dust, I had looked only at the blind, flat walls of the houses, built flush with the narrow pavement, offering nothing to the passer-by but massive wooden *portals*, barred windows, and the glare of plaster walls, dazzlingly white,

yellow, or faintly pink and blue in the sun. But now I peeped through half-open doorways into the cool green patios and gardens the flat houses enclosed, and knew that these houses were homes and lovely.

In the Indian market the venders were squatting beside their rows of red earthenware jars and pyramids of plums and mangoes. "*Que va a llevar, señora?*" (What will you have?) they singsonged as I passed. Beyond rose the "stately palace" Cortez built. This massive structure, strong as a fortress, still served for the government offices, but four centuries had laid soft colorings of yellow, brown, and gray on the stone and mellowed its grimness. Cortez set his palace on the high ground, just at the point where the valley suddenly deepens a hundred feet or more by a swift descent into a vast *barranca*, miles in extent, carved out by the mountain torrents that rush down in the rainy season. Here the handful of Spaniards were safe from surprise attack, and here they might stand on the galleries and gloat over the wealth of the conquered valley — the maize, the cattle, and the shining sugar cane that, more than anything else, made Morelos rich.

I climbed to the famous back corridor where, years later, I was to hear Mr. Elihu Root, speaking at a banquet given in his honor, say that never in all his travels had he seen anything more beautiful than the view across the valley from where he stood, with the grand old volcanoes looking down on Cuernavaca and the surrounding villages; and that Cortez must

have been a man of marvelously good taste to have chosen such a spot to build his palace. But I thought that afternoon that it must have been a relief to the grim conquistador, who held the valley only by unrelaxing vigilance, to look sometimes past the fat lands below him, across to the mountains. For I thought that this man who had no reverence for a civilization must have had a love of space and elbowroom.

Across the roofs of the houses I saw the twin towers of the Cathedral, built as early as the palace, by the monks and priests who came with the Spanish soldiers to convert the people they conquered; and I laid a course toward them. When I reached the Cathedral yard I found numbers of people scurrying about in spite of the heat, filled with the rustling, soft-voiced excitement of the Indian. Some were trailing streamers of bright-colored paper and others bent over a pile of fireworks stacked in one corner. The activity seemed to be centring not about the Cathedral itself, but about a smaller church within the enclosure. I approached a serene-faced young Indian mother who sat in the shade against a wall, nursing her baby. "*Fiesta?*" I ventured hopefully. It was one of the few words of Spanish I knew.

"*Sí, señora.*" Her face lit up. She broke into a voluble explanation, of which all I understood was "*a las cinco*" (at five o'clock). "I shall come back," I promised myself. Meanwhile, I remembered, the Borda Gardens were across the way, where I could rest.

An Indian boy swung open the heavy portal in the high wall that shuts the gardens from the outer world, and I passed inside, into an Old-World park. The Borda Gardens had been laid out in the eighteenth century in the Italian style, with all formality, but in this semi-tropical climate vine and tree had budded and spread with a sweet indifference to artificial restraint, so that the maze of paths threaded a tangle of greenery through which gleamed the water of the two lakes and the showering drops of the fountains that bubbled in unexpected glades.

I sank down on the steps by the pergola and pushed off my hat and, leaning my head against a pillar, watched the play of the light on the water. In those days I knew little of Borda, the man who built the gardens. They were to me the place where Maximilian and Carlota had once lived during their brief reign in Mexico. Being young and unhappy myself, my thoughts dwelt on that handsome young couple, in love with each other, rowing over the small lakes, or bathing by the pergola, or resting perhaps where I sat. Here in these gardens, I remembered, Maximilian had been ready to sign the papers of abdication that would have saved his life, when Carlota, too ambitious for him, intervened. . . .

My watch said a quarter to five. Refreshed by this pleasant spell of melancholy, I rose and wandered back to the church. The *fiesta* was now well under way, and it was clear that this must be the day ap-



THE POOL ALBORDA



pointed for the annual blessing of animals and birds, for great numbers of people were flocking from all directions, bringing their fowls and livestock with them.

All the beasts were there, both great and small: horses decorated with gold and silver stars, gay ribbons tied to their manes and tails; cows, donkeys, goats (of the least bucking variety), gayly dressed and ready for the blessing — each fowl with ribbons on its poor little legs. All kinds of birds were there, and parrots painted every color but their own, enraged, screeching and screaming at one another, trying to find out what had happened to them, looking more blighted than blest. Funniest of all were the guinea pigs in cages, giving a touch of composure and nonresistance to the occasion, although the very high walls enclosing both church and patio made escape impossible for man or beast.

The old church bell clanged five. The church door opened, the priest came out. A mad rush was made for him by men, women, and children, each dragging some department of the menagerie behind. But the zoo had been kept tethered too long; the rush was too impetuous. Whether it was an untrained goat that insisted on leading the attack, I do not know, but over went the priest, holy water and all. It was safe to say, however, that each animal was blest by at least a few drops, thus warding off or curing, for one year, all animal infirmities.

Laughing with the townspeople, I knew that I

could be content in Cuernavaca. I said to myself, "Here I shall bring my children and make my home, where all is peace and beauty, and nothing has ever changed or ever will."



CHAPTER II

THE next afternoon I went over to see the place that had been suggested for the tearoom I planned to start. I had put off the moment as long as I could.

At that time there was no place in Cuernavaca, or indeed in Mexico City, where one might stop in the afternoon for a cup of tea and a pleasant chat. It had seemed to me that since there were thriving colonies of English and Americans in Cuernavaca, and a small but steady stream of tourists, there must be a need for such a place, which I could fill. But now that I was actually on my way to the proposed location, I was not so sure. Perhaps the original taste for tea had been entirely supplanted by the taste for coffee, chocolate, cognac. Then too, I had never worked before; and there was no basis for the optimistic hope which had sustained me thus far, that necessity would uncover in me a latent flair for business. The knack of getting seemed to have passed out of our family with my great-grandfather, who

made a fortune in the tea plantations of Ceylon. The rest of us had all been rather gifted spenders, and I myself had been brought up on a continually decreasing scale of luxury which had now reached bottom.

The agent, walking along beside me, explained the advantages of the house to which he was taking me; in good condition, on a main street, just off the Zócalo or plaza, where a sign could be hung in easy view of all the newcomers who arrived with the station mules. I put on a knowing, competent look, but my knees were shaking, and I wondered if my passion for independence was making a fool of me again.

We came to the house, and it was all the agent had said: well situated, in good condition, and so forth. It was not bad-looking — a one-story structure like most of the houses in Cuernavaca, with iron grilles outside its long windows. Part of it had been used as a grocery store and, although the proprietor had left, the groceries had not been moved.

I don't know what I had expected — certainly not the dainty tearoom I planned to open ready-made and waiting for me; but the sight of shelves of tinned and bottled foods, sacks of beans, and a few wilted vegetables knocked the last bit of courage out of me. I mumbled something to the agent, who left, and stood staring at the rows of sardines, prunes, and olives that seemed to grow higher and higher before my eyes; and finally I sat down on a soap box and wept.

I was still weeping on the soap box when an American woman I had known in Mexico City, and who happened to be in Cuernavaca, came in to look for me. She took me by the shoulders and shook me soundly.

"I'm ashamed of you," she told me. "A grown woman, with two children to look after, sitting there and crying like a baby. Afraid to work!"

I braced up then, and the two of us discussed practical ways of putting the house in order. Once the groceries were out, I felt much better. Bare walls were a challenge I understood, and it was a fascinating game making this place attractive on the slender means at my disposal. The rooms at the back I kept for myself and the children, and the two front rooms and the entrance hall were for my business. The larger room was the tearoom, and I was proud of it when I finished: the walls washed cool and white, on the floor a heavy matting in large squares of green and white, and on the Japanese tables of bamboo, to set off the rest, coral-colored gladioli in the pottery vases of the town. The smaller room was really my drawing-room, furnished with the things I loved, — above all, my piano, — but I used to let my customers come into it, and sometimes I played for them.

Because I knew no other way, I had tea served just as I should have in my own house, and I used my own good china and silver teaspoons, as I could not afford to buy new. I never served anything but

tea — the best that could be procured — and toasted, buttered English buns. These buns I was able to buy in a little bakery in the town, which was great good luck for me. I could only afford one servant, but Jovita was a jewel. She had the ability of the good Mexican servant to understand what is wanted no matter how badly it is expressed, and this was fortunate, since I knew hardly any Spanish. She was cook, dishwasher, and housemaid, but when she brought in the tea tray she looked like a very smart waitress indeed, with her immaculate little white apron and smiling face, and her coronet braids piled on her head.

How well I remember the day when my door was pushed open and the shadow of my first customers fell across the threshold! A prima donna making her *début* could not have been more frightened than I, or more determined to win her audience.

Perhaps tea was lucky for my family; at any rate, business was good from the very start. My first patrons were naturally the Britishers and Americans who were living in Cuernavaca because of their connection with the several foreign sugar companies that operated there. They came the first time out of curiosity, and after that because they liked the place. I had been right in my belief that there was a need in Cuernavaca not quite filled by the restaurants, *cantinas* (bars), or even the British and American Clubs. In those days — how different from to-day! — we were all very clannish; the British and Ameri-

cans scarcely mixed with each other, and not at all with the Mexicans. The foreign colonies were little worlds to themselves, surrounded by the quietness of Mexican life in a provincial town, hearing occasional echoes of the gay and magnificent house parties on the outlying estates when the great land-owners were in residence, but chiefly concerned with what was going on "at home," by which they meant the places from which they had come. These people, living in Cuernavaca purely for business reasons, were not for the most part too gay or imaginative socially. All were heartily bored with themselves and each other and the few, familiar gathering places. As one woman put it, "Thank God for a new place to meet the same people!"

There were also living in the town a few upper-class Mexicans who had traveled extensively and developed a cosmopolitan taste for tea, and they also came to my tearoom. Their perfect and beautiful English used to make me ashamed of my few words of Spanish, and one day I remarked on how poorly we foreigners spoke their language. My listener turned to me and said, with the courtesy of the Mexican gentleman, "Madam, never mind how you speak it, but never write it incorrectly"—advice which I have borne in mind to this day, for never have I attempted a letter in Spanish.

But most interesting of all to me were the transients. In those days, as now, Cuernavaca was a resort to which the people of Mexico City came down

for vacations, attracted partly by the quaint charm of the place and partly by its healthfulness. For the climate of Cuernavaca is spring the year round, and the altitude, fifty-three hundred feet, is considerably easier on the heart than the higher altitude of Mexico. All visitors who came to Cuernavaca sooner or later found their way to my door, drawn by the tin teakettle that swung on the wrought-iron arm above it. I frequently had the pleasure of seeing friends I had known when I lived in Mexico City, and met many distinguished strangers.

The prices I charged for my tea and buns were high, but no one ever disputed them. Under Porfirio Díaz, foreigners were able to make so much money in Mexico that prices did not matter to them, and the reputation of the country for exotic beauty and perfect safety in traveling brought as tourists and winter vacationers people of wealth and importance in their own countries. This type of traveler was later frightened away by the disorders of the Revolution and is only now beginning to "re-discover" Mexico. These people appreciated the rather special air my tearoom had, and all seemed to wish me well in my venture.

I remember one occasion when I knew that the British Minister was coming in with a party, and I brought out my very best linens and china to set a pretty tea table. The others in the party were outspoken in their admiration of my things, but the Minister himself seemed quite distressed and em-

barrassed. Finally he beckoned me into the drawing-room.

"Mrs. King," he said bluntly, "you must not use such nice things in your tearoom. If you do, you won't have them long. It may be all right to use the china, for after all, a cup and saucer are hard to hide under one's coat; but people are going to take your teaspoons for souvenirs."

In spite of my inexperienced way of doing things, my cash reserve mounted rapidly. I felt free to slip off once in a while for little picnics with my children. When our quarters seemed small and cramped, and the effort of talking to strangers too much, we would hire a carriage and go for a long drive through the fresh morning countryside. We never failed to return refreshed.

I grew to love the sleek wide fields where the *peones* in their white *calzones* were always working, and the deep *barrancas* that gash the plain. Even in the dry season, when their torrents tame to tiny streams not seen, but faintly heard beneath the brush in their depths, the *barrancas* seemed to me, by their wildness, a part of the mountains whose waters gouge them out. Just as the depth of the *barrancas* is half concealed by the trees and bushes clinging to their sides, so the ruggedness of the mountains that ring the valley is softened, to the eye at least, by the vegetation that creeps to the top of all but the volcanoes. These mountains of the south look always as though draped with heavy neutral-toned

velvet, on which the clouds cast shadows. I used to think that the Indians of Mexico were like their mountains, rounded and soft-looking to the eye, but with tremendous strength and endurance beneath.

In those days the whole valley that surrounds Cuernavaca was divided into great estates, or *haciendas*. The entrances to these *haciendas* were guarded by massive iron gates and fortress-like porter's lodges, which fascinated the children. They always wanted to drive inside, down the broad shady roadway, bordered on one side with a wide stream of mountain water that rippled softly through the shadows. Perhaps a footpath would lead off across a little bridge, through dusky depths of close-set trees — a short cut for those who lived there. But we would drive on a mile or two through park and fields, past substantial stone stables and servants' quarters, to the *hacienda* dwelling itself. The central buildings were always the same: a long, one-story residence with its line of graceful arches, the manor church, and the sugar mill whose smokestacks towered over everything. A ten- or fifteen-foot wall would enclose the group. Sometimes the thatch-roofed huts where the thousands of laborers lived were huddled inside the wall; more often they lay just beyond, where the stream flowed out of the enclosure.

When you were close to the house, the mill did not seem to loom above it, as it did from a distance, reminding you that this was a "centre of production." Close up, you saw only the great verandah that



PEONS IN THE FIELD



shaded the entire front of the house, a verandah thirty feet wide, with beautiful stone floor and high, raftered ceiling, and furnished with every kind of easy chair, couches, rugs, and tables, where great dogs lay and looked at you. Sometimes the house threw forward a fifty-foot wing at either end, and then there would be an immense three-sided court, filled with broad-leafed palms and banana plants with lazy, winnowing leaves, where the fountain-cooled air was sweet with the fragrance of rose trees. The sight of these ample, patriarchal dwellings, three and four hundred years old, satisfied a need in me that was like hunger. I had lived in so many places that I called home wherever I happened to be, but I felt there was no place where I quite belonged.

On several occasions tourists had insisted on buying the little pottery vases I filled with flowers and used on the tables in the tearoom, and I began to think of keeping a supply of the vases on hand to sell to those who admired them. They were inexpensive vases that I picked up at the market place, but I selected them with loving care, because I thought the pottery charming and liked to shop for it.

"If you want to lay in a stock of vases, why don't you go out to San Anton, where they're made?" some Canadian friends suggested. "If you like, we'll come along with you."

The three of us took a carriage and started off. We found a sorry Indian village — one long street of straggling bamboo huts that ended in a dilapidated

church. The patient Indian children, never noisy and never determinedly naughty like ours, were playing quietly with their hungry-looking dogs and with dolls made of a stick and a bit of cloth. In the doorways the women were grinding corn for *tortillas*, or slapping the moist paste back and forth between their palms to shape the thin cake that was their chief food and kept them eternally busy with its preparation. Some of the men had gone to work in the *milpas*, their patches of corn; some, clad in rags, were shaping pottery with primitive wheels. A scant stock of finished pottery, a handful of unweeded vegetables, and a few scrawny chickens picking among the stones constituted the wealth of these people. This was San Anton, famed before the coming of Cortez for its potters.

I picked the pottery I thought would sell and counted out the money.

"Good heavens!" said one of my friends. "You must n't pay what they ask. They expect you to beat down the first price. You 'll spoil them!"

"Spoil them!" I said indignantly. "I feel I ought to empty out my purse," for my heart ached for the way they lived. In earlier years I had taken long horseback trips with my husband in the barren north, and pitied the poverty of the Indians there. But those poor wretches had had to wring their living from the desert. To find the same misery in fertile, rich Morelos was too much. Here, in the midst of plenty, it seemed wicked that anyone should want.

This was the ugly other side of the picture of life in our state.

The next day I sold that pottery, all of it, to a party of American tourists. My profit was 100 per cent and my customers were pleased with their bargain. From that day on I made it a fixed rule never to haggle with the Indians. Later on I established at San Anton a little pottery factory of my own. The potters worked as they pleased, following the designs of their own village or copying rare and beautiful pieces I had secured from other parts of the country, and I chose the pieces I wanted for myself and payed them whatever price they asked. No matter what the price was, I doubled it for my customers; and they were glad enough to buy.

I was scolded time and again for my policy with the Indians, by acquaintances as well as friends, for I was going contrary to the established custom of the country. "The Indians know no better, Mrs. King; you will make them discontented!" These were not hard people either; they were people kind and considerate to the house servants under their eye, contributors to charity. But they believed that the potters, and the *peones* who toiled all day in the fields and sugar mills for a few cents, and got drunk on *pulque* when they could, lived like beasts because they had no capacity for anything better; because if one believed this, it was easy to get rich.

In spite of my own unorthodox methods, my affairs continued to prosper. It seemed that every-

thing I touched succeeded. One day a friend who was in need of ready money left some lovely old fans and laces with me to sell for her if I could, and I disposed of them easily with a nice profit for both of us. When the wife of my landlord called on me and offered to build a second story on my house for a slight increase in rent, I decided to go into the curio business on a large scale. When the upper story was finished I had a completely private apartment upstairs, with a glorious view across the low roofs opposite straight to the volcanoes; and the whole downstairs for the display of the fine Spanish combs, brocades, leather work, and wrought iron that abounded in the Republic in those days. I also kept on hand a supply of hand-embroidered linen dresses, very finely made, but not expensive.

When a party of prominent Chicagoans came down to Cuernavaca on a private train, I was asked to arrange a dinner for them.

“But that is out of my line,” I said.

“Even so,” said the railroad official blandly, “you will know how to please them, Señora King.”

With fear and trembling and the partnership of a clever Canadian girl, Margaret Kerr, I did contrive a suitable meal, laid in a bougainvillea-covered arbor adjoining the Cathedral yard. The trick, of course, was to select a menu that would seem pleasantly exotic to the visitors, yet not be too *pícoso* (hot) for their taste. We finally decided on *enchiladas* — *tortillas* rolled up with a filling of meat and sauce —

and *mole*, the national holiday dish — turkey prepared with a sauce in which are blended some thirty-odd varieties of *chiles* (peppers) and spices. For safety's sake we included good substantial roast beef. The price we charged, seven pesos a head, was the current scandal in Cuernavaca.

When the evening came, the food, prepared by the best chef in Cuernavaca, was delectable, the wines the best, and the service perfect. Our visitors were delighted with everything, and after dinner they all came over to the tearoom to see my curios. They bought everything I had — rare curios, pottery, dresses, and the water-color sketches a German artist had left with me to tack up on the walls; partly, I think, because they liked the things I had, all good of their kind, and partly because they liked my friend and me and wanted to help us.

When the place was stripped, a Mr. Scott said plaintively, "Mrs. King, are you sure you have n't anything else that we can buy?" and we all laughed. He was the Scott of the great Chicago department store, Carson, Pirie and Scott, and I carried on a correspondence with him for quite a while afterwards.

About this time my landlord, Governor Alarcon, died, and Don Pablo Escandon was appointed his successor. Don Pablo, like many of the Mexican gentlemen of the day, had been educated in the Jesuit College at Stonyhurst, England, and he often dropped in in the afternoon for a cup of tea. We

would talk together of our school days in England and towns we both knew, and the homeliness of the English countryside. Like so many of his class, Don Pablo was more at home in Europe than in Mexico; while he loved his own country he found it a little barbarous; and the broad new boulevards, frequent parks, and magnificent public buildings that were being erected in Mexico City were a source of great satisfaction to him. "It is almost Paris!" he said. He was pleased when I repeated to him the admiring comments of the cultured foreign travelers who visited my tearoom.

"You think it has always been like this, Señora King," he said to me. "But you are wrong. You cannot understand what barbarians we used to be, before Porfrito civilized us. If you had seen Mexico City in those days, with Lake Texcoco lapping at our ankles in the rainy season, you would appreciate what a project that was, the drainage of the Valley of Mexico. And consider our modern railroads and telegraphs, ports and industries, financed by the foreign capital he has cunningly coaxed in. To-day, we are a nation respected by other nations. We are cosmopolitan; our young men, educated abroad, are men of the world, who are a credit to their country whilst they amuse themselves in London or Paris. We have our opera here in Mexico, and there will be brilliant gatherings when the National Theatre is completed — the ladies all in their boxes, the tiaras sparkling in their hair. That will be something to

see, will it not, Señora King? And all the work of Porfirio Díaz!"

Dictator Díaz was a personal friend of Don Pablo's, and he loved to talk about him. I myself knew the dictator only as a gentleman of marked breeding and distinction whom I had once met at a garden party. Don Pablo sketched his friend as a statesman and a patriot.

"Thirty-five years in the saddle; no more squabbles and revolts; no foreign emperors (like Maximilian); peace and prosperity all around. . . . There is a man, Señora King!"

It had been purely to please Don Porfirio, and his wife, that Don Pablo had accepted the governorship of our state. He himself was a man of amiable, scholarly tastes, too rich to look on the post as a juicy plum. "I did n't want to be governor," he'd say. "I told Porfirito I did n't want the appointment. Why do I have to mix in these beastly local politics?"

For Don Pablo's appointment had not been well received in Cuernavaca. His predecessor, Alarcon, had been an Indian of plain beginnings appointed governor because he had once saved the life of Porfirio Díaz. When Alarcon died, the people of Morelos requested President Díaz to appoint in his place another Indian, a plain man, popular here. But the request was passed over. Looking back, I can see that it was because of the increasing land disputes that the dictator wanted a man of his own class and

clique. At the time, I was merely sorry that the people were not pulling with my friend Don Pablo, who had a sincere, public-spirited interest in beautifying our town.

He and I would discuss this matter with great animation, for the loveliness of Cuernavaca was close to my heart. I liked the town as it was, but Don Pablo had sensible, practical ideas.

"Look down that street to the market," he'd say. "Fruit squashed all over the place. Dirt. Smells. It's a disgrace to our fair city; and right in the middle of things, too, by the Zócalo. What would you say, Señora King, if we took it all away and put a little garden there with nice neat walks and a fountain?"

"And the market?" I asked.

"Oh, we shall build a big clean building for that. A stone building, I think. I am going to get the *hacendados* together and talk to them about it."

"But what have the grand *hacendados* to do with the poor little Indian market, Don Pablo?"

"Ah," said Don Pablo, wagging his head. "A market building costs money. And the *hacendados* have the money."

It was a fact. The *hacendados* had the money — all of it. I believe that, at this time, practically the entire state was owned by some thirty-six of these great landholders.

Don Pablo got up. "And now," he said, "to get them together — if they're not all in Mexico or Paris."

For the *hacendados* of Morelos were notoriously never at home. And a bad thing that was for them in the end. They were men of humane instincts, for the most part, some of them kindness itself, but negligent and overly indulged. They thought of the land in terms of the golden stream that flowed from it into their laps. If they had lived more at home on their *haciendas* they would have seen that the golden stream was tainted with the sweat and the blood of their laborers, and I think that they would have set their house in order. They might have come to know also the smell of wet dark earth in newly turned furrows and the pride in first fruits, and to understand the passion of the *indio* for the *milpa* of his fathers.

As it was, the *hacendados* came down once or twice a year, to an *hacienda* dressed up to receive them. They were the most charming people in the world, highly educated, cultured, traveled, with a delicate intuitive responsiveness to others that seemed like a sixth sense, it was so inborn. Their coming was an event looked forward to with joy by the laborers and their women. All would be waiting, the children freshly scrubbed, their mothers adorned with pitiful ribbons and ornaments hoarded for the occasion; there would be a *fiesta* with music and dancing and fireworks. The gracious lady, unbelievably beautiful and glamorous, would smile on them and ask the children's names, and distribute a carload of calicoes, shoes, blankets, toys, and other things use-

ful or pleasing. Especially she would see that there were rosaries of glass beads in every color, costing almost nothing, but important to her and priceless to the recipients because they were "blessed." After which the proprietors would leave the workers to their gala night of drinking and love-making, boasting and fighting, and return to their mansion filled with guests.

Then, if the family was not too addicted to priestly direction, would begin a round of gayety — balls, chess and billiard tournaments, tennis, boating, swimming, shooting, and breaking wild horses. The horsemanship of these Mexican gentlemen was a beautiful thing to see, and the good looks of the rider and his fine mount were set off by the dashing rancher's costume: tight-fitting embroidered jacket and tight-fitting trousers that tapered to fit like a glove round the ankle, with a line of gold or silver buttons all the way up the outer side of the leg. With this was worn — and is still, on occasion — the big-brimmed sombrero, embroidered heavily in gold and silver thread.

A favorite sport was one called *jaripeo*; I saw it later, when I had leisure to visit at the *haciendas*. A wild steer, bull, or cow, but usually cow, is driven up by several cowboys. The cow is thrown down, and when possible two of the boys jump on her back — one facing the head, the other the tail. The cow is surprised, to say the least. The one I saw jumped and bucked all over the corral until she succeeded

in pitching off one of the riders. The last one thrown was, of course, the best rider. A cow is always very much feared. A professional bullfighter will never fight a cow, for the technique of the bull ring hinges on the fact that the bull charges straight, with its head down, unable to defend himself or to look about. But Sooky! She charges with her head in the air ready for anything and anybody. I shall never forget that one *jaripeo* I saw. The men in the ring, with the cow — head in air — after them, ran in every direction for safety, thinking of only one thing, and that was to save their necks. They usually manage to save them, but by a very narrow margin.

After a few weeks of country life, however, the *bacendados* would weary of these simple diversions and be off with their train of licensed personal servants to Mexico City or Europe and more extravagant pleasures. Then, as the bills began to pile up and the calls for money became urgent, the manager would tighten up on the overseers, and the overseers would drive the *peones*, with whips if necessary. I would see the poor wretches as I drove about, their feet always bare and hardened like stones, their backs bent under burdens too heavy for a horse or mule, treated as people with hearts would not treat animals. They could not leave, because they were bound to the land like serfs, by their debt to the *hacienda* store.

Occasionally, but very rarely, in my search for curios, I would come on something that antedated the Spanish Conquest and harked back to the time

when these Indians had been a free people and a nation controlling their valley. One of my most valued treasures was an old bull's horn, and one day a professor from one of the colleges in the Eastern United States, who was a student of the Conquest, spied this and picked it up with reverence.

"Do you know what this is?" he asked.

I said that I knew it was a very old ceremonial horn that had been used, as was also a drum made of a hollow log of some precious wood like mahogany, to call the tribes together in time of war.

"For any important assembly," corrected the professor, and added quietly, "I heard the blast of one of these not long ago."

"Good heavens!" I said, thoroughly impressed, for I had not known any were still in use. An American youngster who had been examining the inlaid butt of an antiquated Spanish pistol turned frankly around to listen.

"I have come down to Mexico," said the professor, "to study early Spanish documents; and not long ago I appealed to the patriarch of one of your neighbouring Indian villages, whose name I have promised to keep secret, to let me look at the sixteenth-century parchments that prove the title of the village to its land; a title based, as you know, on the decree of Charles V, who was ashamed of the greed of his grandees and returned certain lands to the tribes for their use and that of their descendants. Only the patriarch, the *cacique*, knows where the documents

are hidden, and he was most reluctant to bring them out lest some harm come to them. It seems the villages hereabout have been having trouble defending their lands from the *hacendados*, who want them for sugar cane."

"Yes, that is so," I nodded, "the governor has told me about it"; for, because I was a foreigner, and did not even speak the language, Don Pablo sometimes spoke more frankly to me than he might have otherwise. "It is a great trial to Don Pablo," I went on. "The *hacendados* perpetually want more land for planting sugar cane, but since practically all the land in the state is already parceled out among them, there is nothing left but the scanty patches belonging to the Indian villages. When the *hacendados* try to buy these fields, the Indians refuse to sell. Money means little to them, but they know that so long as they have the *milpa* which fed their father and their father's father, they can grow what they need to eat."

"Very sensible of them, too," commented the professor.

"But the *hacendados* do not understand, or wish to understand, that point of view. When the time comes for planting, they want land in a hurry; so they seize the Indians' *milpas* by force and deposit the purchase money in the banks, to the Indians' account. They consider this honorably ends the matter, but the Indians, naturally, do not think so. They won't touch the money. They want their land."

"And they should have it," said the professor. "The patriarch eventually consented to call the people of his village together, — they were called with a blast from just such a bull's horn as this, Mrs. King, — and they gave him their permission and authorization to show me the documents. I studied them carefully and the legality of the title is unquestionable."

"Perhaps," I said sadly, "but that does n't seem to help the Indians. I believe they have even appealed to Don Porfirio, but they continue to lose their *milpas*. It seems a wicked thing to me, this taking the land by force from those who work it with their hands and love it. Some day, I think, there will be an upheaval here."

The younger American had been drinking in our conversation. Now he struck in earnestly, "It may come sooner than you think!" He was an eager, sensitive-looking boy. "Our newspapers have been carrying rumors of unrest in Mexico for the last year or two."

"Your newspapers!" I said, smiling a little. "Ours are written here on the spot, and they talk of nothing but peace and progress."

"The dictator muzzles them!" came back the boy. He put down the pistol and came closer. "No, really, Mrs. King, you have an election coming on, and Don Porfirio is n't going to have everything his own way this time. I studied Spanish at school, and as our train came down from the North I used to get off

at the stations and try to talk to the people. They 're tired of Porfirio Díaz!"

His gravity was appealing. I said, to let him down as gently as possible: "Of course people are tired of Porfirio Díaz, after thirty years. Many of them have been tired of him for quite a while. Why, only the other day, a gentleman for whom I have the greatest respect and liking put up his hand here in my tearoom and solemnly swore that he would aid in his downfall! But such talk has been going on for years, and nothing ever comes of it."

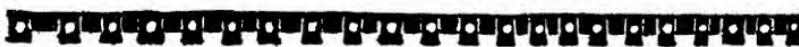
The professor said kindly to the boy, "Don't take too seriously the campaign speeches of this Madero, who has been set up as Díaz' opponent in the coming election. There has to be an opponent, to make the thing look right, but Madero is only a straw man for the dictator to knock down."

"Oh, I don't think so!" said the boy ingenuously. "This Madero is different. I 've been reading some pamphlets they gave me, and he tells the people all about the rights and liberties they ought to have, and how there should be justice for all and better living conditions for the working classes!"

The professor and I glanced at each other. Even the boy, I think, realized how the phrases sounded. . . .

The professor was smiling. He had been standing in the doorway all the while, still fingering the bull's horn, and now he said smoothly, "Conditions have been much the same here for nearly four hundred

years. So long as the *politicos* continue to hurl abuses at each other in perfect *castellano*, I think we may conclude that all is well in your charming country, and you need have no fear, Mrs. King. But," and he paused impressively, "when the blast of the bull's horn and the drum call of the hollow log sound again in the soul of the people, as they will one day, then there will be no peace and no safety. Then there will be a revolution!"



CHAPTER III

ANY interest I might have had in the coming election was quickly driven from my mind.

Don Pablo came in one day looking very mysterious and excited. "Señora King," he said, "the Hotel Bella Vista is for sale, cheap. Why don't you buy it?"

"Good heavens!" I said. "Why should I?"

"Because," he said solemnly, "you are the woman to run it. How often I have sat here and heard you tell me how it should be run!"

Don Pablo, it developed, was entirely serious in his proposal. He talked at great length and with such conviction that the idea began to seem less ridiculous to me than when he had first suggested it. I had always had a fondness for the Bella Vista from the day, five years before, when the rampant station mules had deposited me at its door, and I had often thought I should like to try my hand at bringing out the full beauty of the old Colonial structure. I was full of theories, as Don Pablo had intimated,

about the hotel business, and while I had never expected to put them to the test, I had a sporting faith in my own ideas.

"Consider, Señora King," went on Don Pablo, "how propitious the time is for such a venture. This year (1910) is the year of the *Centenario*, the hundredth anniversary of Mexican independence from Spain. Already Porfirito is making plans to show to the world the glory and prosperity of Mexico. There will be magnificent feasts and celebrations in the capital, to which people will flock from all parts of Mexico; and visitors will come from other countries. Since our quaint town of Cuernavaca lies close to Mexico City, what could be more natural than for these people to make a trip here to see the sights?"

Don Pablo was right. This was the moment to launch a fine hotel, of the type I had always maintained could be made to pay in Cuernavaca. The climate and altitude here were perfect for a fashionable resort, the setting historic and beautiful, but there were only two "modern" hotels in the town, the Bella Vista and the Morelos opposite, and their modernity was more a matter of conveniences added by recent American management than anything else. Both buildings dated back almost four hundred years. . . . Common sense jerked up my fancies.

"It's out of the question, Don Pablo," I said with decision. "It's all very well for a couple of amateurs like you and me to sit and talk, but we'd better stop there. Even if I could afford to buy the

Bella Vista, which I can't, I should n't know what to do with it. I 've never even rented a room."

"You will learn," said Don Pablo blandly.

"Perhaps you could tell me," I suggested, thinking this would silence him, "perhaps you could tell me how to treat the guests."

But Don Pablo was not to be put off. "Treat them," he said inexorably, "as though you had invited them out for the week-end."

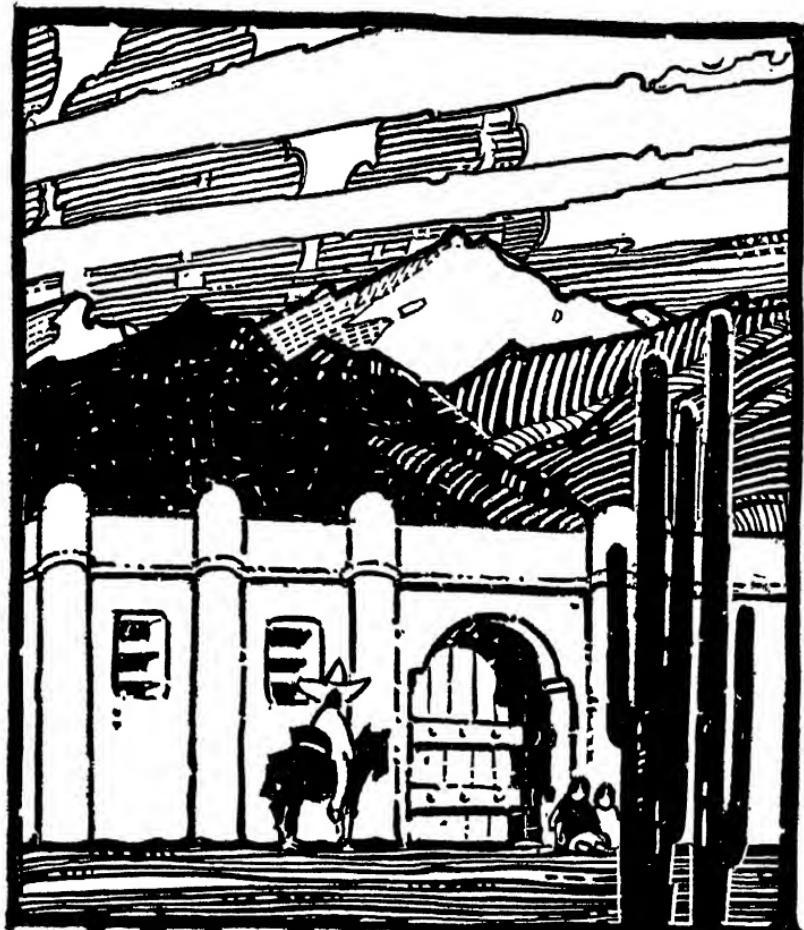
In the end, his air of destiny made its impression on me. I found, on inquiring, that the price asked for the hotel was low, so low that if I cared to buy I could almost swing the deal by myself. For the first time I realized fully how successful I had been, and my self-confidence increased. My little pottery factory at San Anton was running smoothly under the supervision of the head man, Guadalupe, and an American lady agreed to take over the tearoom and curios for me. I bought the Bella Vista, and centred my whole attention on the remodeling of it.

The Bella Vista was particularly lovely to work with, for it had been originally the manor house of a great *hacienda*, and a kind of provincial graciousness still clung to it. I tried to keep this atmosphere while adding the newest comforts, and I spared neither pains nor expense. When I was through I had thirty rooms, each with a private bath, grouped about the three patios — gardens set in the midst of the house, open to the sky and filled with tropical plants and climbing roses. On the side of the central

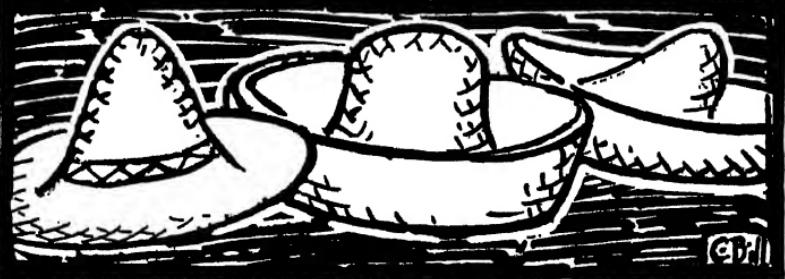
patio the old stone staircase ascended with a sweep of wrought-iron rails, its shallow steps worn with the footfalls of centuries, but still solid as rock. In this patio stood the Spanish fountain that was the centre of the house for me. This fountain had a kind of bubbling life of its own, and when I think back now to my old Bella Vista it is always the fountain that comes first. I can still see the rainbow flash of the drops of water, like so many diamonds, and hear the even, joyous tinkling sound I listened for day and night.

As often happens in the provinces in Mexico, the entrance to my hotel was through a *portal* or verandah opening on the street. The low arches of the Bella Vista extended clear across the pavement to the curb, hinting to the *pelado* that he had better walk in the street, and inviting *gente decente*, "respectable" people, to linger in passing for a chat and cool drink, and, perhaps, a shoeshine while they sat. I filled this *portal* with Boston ferns and mission chairs. ("Comfortable chairs, *señora*, for heaven's sake," Don Pablo had pleaded. "And plenty of them. So that the gentlemen of the town may congregate on Sunday morning and watch the pretty girls parading in the Zócalo.")

Don Pablo was an interested onlooker. A luxurious hotel seemed to him a fine thing for Cuernavaca, quite in line with the ambitions of his friend, Dictator Porfirio Díaz, to make Mexico a show place for the rest of the world to marvel at. Then, too, he had



HACIENDA



a sort of godfatherly concern, since the project was his idea. He was a man with a cosmopolitan experience of hotels, and the inborn Latin feeling for the grand manner. It delighted him to hear that my waiters were going to wear the black jackets of the city and white gloves. He egged me on to new extravagances.

"*Mire, Señora King,*" he would say, "this is very elegant, your drawing-room all green and white with its mosaic floors and potted palms and its long windows looking into the tree-tops, but you must have more lights. Clusters over the grand piano, the reading and writing tables, and lamps for bridge—that is all well and good, but this is a large room and the ceiling is high. You must have little lights in the ceiling, too; all around it, like a theatre."

And that was how I came to have the hundred tiny lights set round the ceiling. As a final touch, I hung red and black *zarapes*¹ of Oaxaca, split, their borders turned to the inside, as portières in the four tall, dramatic doorways.

I knew that the renovation of the Bella Vista was bound to create a stir in Cuernavaca, but in spite of Don Pablo's predictions I had not expected that Mexico City would also take an interest. To my surprise, the *Mexican Herald*, an English newspaper

¹ *Zarapes* are hand-woven blankets made by the Indians, woven on simple looms and, in those days, colored with lovely vegetable dyes made all over the republic.

subsidized by the government, printed a long story about the new hotel, and as this paper reached all the foreigners in Mexico City, reservations began to pour in on me.

The Saturday evening the hotel was formally re-opened, I put on evening dress and the earrings, as Don Pablo had instructed me, and prepared to greet my guests. As I have already related, the place was jammed with friends, well-wishers, and curiosity seekers. Don Pablo, who had promised to help me receive, — as indeed I thought he should, since it was he who had got me into this! — bolted when he saw the mob, and left me to face the enemy alone. I was thoroughly rattled. An American gentleman, a Mr. Harmon, who was a prominent New York lawyer, came up to me and introduced himself. He had, he reminded me, reserved two rooms by telegraph. I was so bewildered that all I could say to him was, "Oh, yes! Be good for a moment, and I will arrange with you."

Mr. Harmon was, naturally, taken aback. His wife told me later that he sought her out and said, between indignation and surprise, "That's the damnedest Englishwoman I ever saw. She told me to be good and sit down. What do you think of that?"

The Harmons had come for the week-end, but they stayed six weeks and we became fast friends. I still receive messages from Mrs. Harmon through a friend, and I have always regretted that I was never

able to accept her invitation to visit her in New York.

For me that summer was a whirl of excitement. I knew that if my hotel was to be a success, I should have to persuade my guests to remain for extended visits, and that this could be done only by amusing them. Cuernavaca, once its beauty and historic interest were granted, was after all a quiet country town where there was nothing much to do. I had engaged as manager for my hotel a capable young Scotsman, Willie Nevin. Willie spoke Spanish like a native and understood the business end, so that I was able to leave routine matters to him. My part was to look after our guests' entertainment as though, in Don Pablo's phrase, I had invited them out for the week-end.

I saw to it that it was always possible to make up a table of bridge if I had to take the fourth hand myself. I arranged little dances, and an occasional concert when some musician was in town. This was not very difficult, because I could read any music at sight and, if need be, play the accompaniments myself. There were picnics in carriages and on horse-back to La Herradura, the horseshoe-shaped hill outside the town, or to the falls, and excursions to San Anton and Chapultepec and the other neighboring villages on *fiesta* days, when the fireworks were popping and the *indios* dancing.

As the summer went on we heard more and more about the glorious plans for the sixteenth of Sep-

tember, which in this year of 1910 would mark the hundredth anniversary of Mexican independence from Spain. Porfirio Díaz was bound to celebrate this occasion with fitting splendor, and every set of guests who came from the capital would tell us of new parades, bullfights, or balls that had been added to the programme. Every civilized country had been invited to send an official representative, the best it had, and all these invitations were being accepted. All of the tourists already in Mexico who could possibly manage it were planning to come. I was elated at the prospect, because I knew that most of these visitors would come sooner or later to Cuernavaca; only Willie Nevin, my manager, was unimpressed by the magnificence of the plans. He was a canny Scot, inclined to look on the dark side.

"Things must be pretty bad," he'd say, "if Porfirito has to put on a show like that to keep people's minds off this Madero and the election."

"Nonsense, Willie," I scoffed. "Who cares about elections? They're just a formality here."

"Well," said Willie flatly, "you wait and see. Porfirito's birthday's on the fifteenth, and there's going to be almost as much Porfirio Díaz as independence in this celebration."

The *Centenario* plans very naturally roused a new interest in the history of Mexico. My guests were full of questions. They asked about Hidalgo, the country priest who, with his handful of parishioners, poor Indians armed with what was at hand, first

raised the standard of revolt against the Spaniards, and about Morelos, that other patriot for whom our state was named. I knew little enough about Mexican history at that time, myself, for I could not read Spanish. But I had always been intensely interested in the customs and background of the people among whom I was living, and simply through conversations with people well informed on these matters I had picked up all sorts of interesting facts and fascinating stories. I could tell the strangers who were interested how for seventy-two days and nights the Spaniards had besieged the town of Cuautla, not far from where we were, till the food gave out and the water was cut off. Still the people of Cuautla would not surrender. Morelos, their leader, kept them dancing in the plaza so they would not think of their misery and weaken. And on the seventy-third day these heroic people cut their way through the ring of besiegers and saved themselves.

Sometimes they asked about the older heroes of the valley, the Tlahuicas who fought Cortez, clothed in masks and a kind of armor made of the heads and skins of wolves and jaguars — we call them tigers — and mountain lions. Then I would tell them how Cuernavaca had once been called Cuauhnáhuac, “near to the forests,” but the fumbling tongues of the conquerors were not equal to those syllables, and they called it Cuernavaca, “cow’s horn” in their language, which was how the name sounded to them. I would get out the field glasses and let them scan the

dark flashing rocks where the town of Tepoztlan lies — sheer, forbidding volcanic cliffs that stand out harshly by their nakedness in a valley where all other hills and mountains are softened with vegetation. The highest pinnacle of rock, I said, was called the Diviner's House, and had been fortress, temple, or, perhaps, place of human sacrifice; it was so old that its original purpose was blurred with time; for this eyrie was the cradle of the nation.

Once in a while, adventurous souls, their imagination fired, would set out on the short but difficult journey — by train, by burro, and then on foot — to scale the heights of remote Tepoztlan and experience the incomparable view one was said to command from the Diviner's House. I always longed to go with them, but that was out of the question. Most of my guests were not so active. They preferred to sink deeper in my big green armchairs and listen to tales of other people's adventures.

"And now about Borda, the man who built the lovely gardens," they would urge me on. "You promised to tell us about Borda, Mrs. King!"

Borda's story was indeed a favorite of mine, and one which was always sympathetic to my listeners, because it was in the pioneering tradition of our own people. Borda was a stranger who came to a new country and fitted in. He was born a Frenchman, Joseph de la Borda, the son of an officer of Louis XIV. At the age of sixteen he came to Mexico, and in the following years amassed an enormous fortune in the

gold and silver mines. Having made his money himself, he had a feeling, very rare in that time and in this country of great inherited estates, for the men who worked with and for him. He had even a sense of his responsibility toward the towns, such as Taxco in Guerrero, which grew up largely as the result of his enterprises.

He was a very generous man, not in the cold, embarrassed Anglo-Saxon fashion of our latter-day philanthropists who leave their millions as "foundations," but with gusto and enjoyment in giving and a salt of showmanship. It was he who introduced into Mexico the custom of the Christmas tree, and Christmas Eve was a lucky time for his workmen and the poor, for thousands of pesos were distributed to them. He was an ardent Catholic and contributed money, jewels, and churches with the cheerful slogan, "God gives to Borda, and Borda gives to God." For the dedication of the church beside the house in Cuernavaca, the path from door to door where the prelates were to walk was strewn with gold dust, which the poor were allowed to gather up later. As he grew older and it became evident, his children having gone into the Church, that he would have no descendants, he indulged to the full his taste for magnificent show. He had a fancy, perhaps, to live in his new country as royalty lived in France, for there are reminiscences of Versailles in the gardens and mansion he built at Cuernavaca.

One night a famous archbishop, arriving to visit

him, was chagrined to find gates and gardens quite dark. But presto! his host beside him lit a cigarette, and instantly the gardens were illuminated in the most fantastic and beautiful manner by fireworks in set pieces, fountains playing in brilliant color, flowers and forms that hung from trees and bushes filled with glowing lights. On other occasions, it is said, lovely ladies were glimpsed in the garden, diaphanously clad, like houris in a paradise.

He died a poor man, but he had enjoyed his money, and his name, gratefully remembered, has slipped softly into the language of his adopted country.

I often thought of Borda as the *Centenario* approached. This festival that was supposed to represent the patriotic feelings of the nation at large was being celebrated with a magnificence worthy of the old millionaire, but with a total absence of his spirit of good will and generosity toward all. When Borda put on a costly show, he spent his own money; but the dictator was spending the money of the people, who could ill afford it. It seemed to me that the pretentiousness of the plans for this one occasion had gone beyond the bounds of good taste, considering the miserable conditions under which the mass of the people lived. When I saw the Indians in rags, I was indignant at the prices I heard were being paid for the horses that were to draw the carriages of the ambassadors on the sixteenth, a day supposed to commemorate the liberation of the people.

Willie Nevin, my manager, did not like this either.

"These *indios* are n't the fools they take them for," he 'd say. "There 's a fellow over near Cuautla — Emiliano Zapata 's his name — who 's been stirring up the people. It seems the *hacienda* annexed his father's *milpa*. Later they sent him to the owner's Mexico City house on an errand, and when he saw the horses stabled there in marble stalls, it made him pretty sore. You can bet that when the people see this *Centenario* circus they 're not going to fall down on their faces and worship; they 're going to ask, 'Who paid for this?'"

By the fourteenth of September all of us who could possibly contrive it were up in Mexico City to see the pageantry. We saw the plenipotentiaries, representing the various nations, driving up in their gorgeous dress uniforms to the National Palace to pay their respects to Porfirio Díaz, permanent president of Mexico. They rode in luxurious carriages drawn by the most beautiful horses that could be bought, the horses whose price had shocked Willie Nevin. Escorting the ambassadors was a squadron of hussars in gala dress, who galloped ahead of the coaches to clear the streets of the crowds that gathered to watch the spectacle.

On the night of the fifteenth, the round of feasts, dances, sports, receptions, and other entertainments began by a grand banquet in honor of Porfirio Díaz, whose birthday it was. The next day, Independence Day, and for several days afterwards, there were parades, bullfights, *jaripeos*, and so on. On the

night of the sixteenth was given the most brilliant ball of the epoch; a gathering of the aristocracy of Mexico, and an exhibition of the gorgeous gowns and precious jewels for which the women of Mexico were famous. Such a display had not been seen since the days of the Emperor Maximilian. All the diplomatic missions, guests of the Government of Mexico, were entertained with lavish hospitality in the palaces of the city, whose owners had refurnished them to suit the most fastidious foreign taste.

For weeks after, in Cuernavaca, we talked of these festivities. The newspapers filled out our knowledge of the events we had not attended ourselves. Willie Nevin was constantly pointing out that no nation could afford such spending, but it was Willie's fate, like Cassandra's, to have his prescience of disaster ignored. I paid no attention to what he said even when the dictator put Madero, the candidate who was opposing him in the coming election, in jail for using accounts of the extravagance to inflame the people against the party in power. Later, Mr. Madero was released.

Then came news that a Madero supporter, Aquiles Serdan of Puebla, had been killed with his wife, defending their home against government officers determined to enter and search it. I was shocked, but still I did not realize the seriousness of the rioting that followed in Puebla.

That afternoon Don Pablo stopped in to see me. He was clearly upset. "But this is a revolt, Señora

King! Imagine! And who do you suppose is mixed up in it? Our friend Señor Luis Cabrera."

I had a sudden remembrance of Señor Luis Cabrera putting up his hand in my tearoom months before and swearing to aid in the downfall of Díaz.

"Oh, I knew all about that," I said, unimpressed.

"You did! What do you mean?" demanded Don Pablo, bristling. "I have a good mind to put you in jail for not having told me."

"You don't think it's really serious, do you?" I asked, with some surprise, and beginning to be a little alarmed.

"Oh, certainly not serious," said Don Pablo, laughing at my fears. "Our Porfirito with his army and his strength of character will make short work of this revolt."

A few weeks later Porfirio Díaz was fleeing for his life on the *Ipiranga*, the rich families running at his heels like turkeys; Francisco I. Madero was marching down from the north on Mexico City, joined by ragged thousands; and the *peones* of our own state, Morelos, were up in arms, led by Emiliano Zapata.

The blast of the bull's horn and the drum call of the hollow log had sounded in the soul of the people.



CHAPTER IV

QUICKLY close everything, Señora King! The fierce Zapata is coming, killing and destroying everything in his path!"

It was one of the leading men of the town who stood panting in my *portal*. "The rebels met our garrison at Cuautla, and cut it to pieces. Only a handful of troops are left to tell the tale; you will see them limping in."

Wounded, on foot, tied up in old rags they came — the remnant of Cuernavaca's invincible garrison. Most of the men would never have made the thirty miles from Cuautla if it had not been for the help of their women, who had pushed them and dragged them along. The doors of the townsfolk were closed to them. With the fierce Zapata coming, the people no longer knew the Federals and the belligerent *soldaderas* who cared for them. In the end we foreign women, who had nothing to fear from either side, sent out coffee and bandages. An American named

Robinson, a mining engineer, went out to the crest of a hill at the entrance to the town to await the approach of Zapata, and to assure him and his ally Asúnsolo, both of whom were known to him personally, that no further resistance would be made.

I was more interested than alarmed myself, but it occurred to me that the American lady who was running my tearoom for me was alone with two pretty daughters, and might be frightened. I sent word for her and her daughters to come over to the Bella Vista, and together we stood at the window to watch the Revolution enter Cuernavaca.

No Cæsar ever rode more triumphantly into a Roman city than did the chief, Zapata, with Asúnsolo at his side, and after them their troops — a wild-looking body of men, undisciplined, half-clothed, mounted on half-starved, broken-down horses. Grotesque and obsolete weapons, long hidden away or recently seized in the pawnshops, were clasped in their hands, thrust through their belts, or slung across the queer old saddles of shapes never seen before. But they rode in as heroes and conquerors, and the pretty Indian girls met them with armfuls of bougainvillea and thrust the flaming flowers in their hats and belts.

There was about them the splendor of devotion to a cause, a look of all the homespun patriots who, from time immemorial, have left the plough in the furrow when there was need to fight. I thrilled with the remembrance that Don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, the

father of Mexican independence, had led an army equipped with weapons as crude as bars of iron, shovels, and pitchforks.

All afternoon the wild-looking bands rode in. At six o'clock we heard shots and screams and feared that fighting had begun among them. Instead we found that the shots were fired in jubilation: the prison doors in the old palace had been opened and all the prisoners set free; political prisoners, murderers—all free! I shall never forget those men and women as they ran like hunted animals past my house seeking cover. In the old days they would have been shot as they ran, and they still believed they must be targets.

The generals had closed all places of drink, so far as they could, knowing that their men would be unmanageable if permitted to become intoxicated. A pathetic band of eight or ten pieces played that night in the Zócalo to excited throngs—strange music on unheard-of instruments, sometimes wailing, sometimes riotous with a tumultuous sweetness, and again harsh and discordant. They played the wailing of four centuries of wrong that had been done them, and the awakening of justice. It was music to those savage men and to those who loved the cause for which they fought; but as I listened I shivered a little, and I was glad that I was an Englishwoman and this was not my Revolution.

Two days later I was forced into contact with the Revolutionists to protect the little factory I had es-

tablished at San Anton. Much to my indignation, I heard that the men were sacking it.

The only way I knew to stop the depredation was to go to see Zapata the chief, and insist on my rights as an Englishwoman. I told my manager, Willie Nevin, what I meant to do, and added, "You must come with me as interpreter."

Willie Nevin was aghast, and at first refused to accompany me; but I insisted. I know now that it was only ignorance that gave me courage.

When we reached the military headquarters, the troops pointed their rifles directly at me, and at trembling Willie behind me, and while many of the guns were antiquated there were plenty, taken from the Federals at Cuautla, that looked as if they would shoot — and straight. I knew so little Spanish that I could only make them understand I wished to enter by parting their rifles right and left with my hands and saying firmly "*Jefe*," which I knew meant "Chief." They allowed me to enter, but stared at a woman who dared to face them in this manner. Perhaps it was their very amazement that made them let me pass to Zapata's quarters. But my efforts to see him were in vain; the beloved general was sleeping, and could not be disturbed.

By this time the succession of guns and savage looks I had been meeting was having its effect on me, and my knees were trembling. I knew, however, that I must hold my own or my prestige was gone, and without that I could do nothing in Cuernavaca.

On I marched, with Willie still behind me, to find the next chief, General Asúnsolo. We climbed upstairs in the old barracks to the room a young Indian pointed out with his rifle. To my surprise the room was perfectly clean, the bed spotless, order and neatness on every hand — something I knew to be unusual with an army on campaign. The man who received me addressed me courteously — in English. It was General Asúnsolo himself.

From the time I met General Asúnsolo I had no more fear. Asúnsolo was different from the grim, determined Indians about him, more like the men to whom I was accustomed. He was, oddly enough, a young man of aristocratic family, educated in the United States of America, and full of life and the love of American "ragtime" — "jazz," they call it now. He had joined the Revolution for the adventure, I think, and because he thought it likely to succeed.

His mere presence in the Revolutionary army was reassuring to me. When I told him my trouble he said courteously, "The raids on your factory shall end at once, Señora King," and he kept his promise. Nor did his kindness end there, for I could not have wished better care than was taken of me and my property during the six weeks he was in Cuernavaca with his troops.

One little incident occurred about this time which, if I had taken it more seriously, might have suggested to me that the peace and order we were enjoying

depended on a very delicate balance between explosive elements.

I was sitting on the verandah one evening after dinner with the two pretty American girls, the daughters of the American lady who had taken over the tearoom for me. We were watching the antics of the invaders, who were amusing themselves in the plaza. To our surprise, one of the Indians suddenly came over and sat down next to the elder of the two girls. He was a young fellow, hung with pistols, and with very little clothing on under the three or four cartridge belts that covered his body.

The girl was too frightened to say anything. My indignation was tremendous. I went over to the boy and told him to move at once, thinking my size, as I am quite tall, would quell him. To my great wonder he simply turned around and said, "Oh, no, madam, these are different times. The *peon* is now the master." The girl translated for me.

My English blood was boiling. It was all I could do to refrain from knocking him off the chair. Instead, however, I went to some Mexicans who were sitting near by and asked their help. One of them, a young doctor, promptly took the Indian by the neck and threw him out of his seat. The boy, on the floor, pulled a pistol.

Luckily for us, at this moment two or three other soldiers, who had seen the trouble from the plaza across the street, seized their companion-in-arms and held him fast. I do not know which of us the boy

meant to shoot, and I do not think he much cared, but it probably would have been me because of my interference.

When the soldiers had been told what happened they carried off the boy as a prisoner to General Asúnsolo, the man I had made my friend. The general sent word at once to ask if I would like to have an example made of him; if so, he would have him shot that night or in the morning. This message alarmed me more than the boy had. I sent word please not to do anything quite so desperate, just keep him locked up for two or three days. I had not been living among and observing these people without learning a little about them, and I realized that what the boy had done had been occasioned simply by his elation over the glory of his troops. Their victories had gone to his head. After he was released he came to me to apologize, and was soon made happy by the present of a little money. From that time on until Asúnsolo's troops left town, he acted as the personal guard for all of us at my house; and very good he was to us.

On the twelfth of June Mr. Madero, the presidential candidate who had led the movement to overthrow the dictatorship, came to Cuernavaca to confer with General Zapata, who had been fighting in his behalf. Zapata arranged a "review" in his honor, and we all turned out to see the show. We were not disappointed.

Surely, all the strength of the Zapatistas was kept

for action, for they wasted none on uniforms or martial drill. Poor fellows, in their huge straw hats and white cotton *calzones*, with cotton socks in purple, pink, or green pulled outside and over the trouser legs. They were equipped with rifles of all sorts, and one poor little cannon. But even the cannon looked proud of being a follower of the brave leader, Emiliano Zapata. Among the troops were women soldiers, some of them officers. One, wearing a bright pink ribbon around her waist with a nice big bow tied in back, was especially conspicuous. She was riding a pony and looked very bright and pretty.

Treacherous little ribbon! It gave the game away, for it was soon seen by that vivid bit of color that the troops were merely marching around a few squares and appearing and reappearing before Don Francisco Madero. The pathetic attempt to please Madero by seeming stronger in numbers than they were was funny, but it was sad, too. Behind that sham was indomitable spirit. Mr. Madero's face, far from expressing any consciousness of the amazing reappearance of the same "battalions" in such quick succession, was perfectly impassive. He knew that passing before him was the embryonic power that would win the Revolution.

Shortly afterward the election took place which made Madero legally president, and he came a second time to Cuernavaca. It was rumored that Zapata would now be appointed governor of Morelos, and

I for one was quite content with this prospect. Rough and untaught as his followers were, they had treated us with true kindness and consideration during their occupation of the town, and I had come to have confidence in their natural qualities. Since my friend Don Pablo Escandon had long ago resigned the governorship and left the country, the post was being temporarily filled by Mr. Carreón, the banker. One morning just before this second visit of Madero's, Mr. Carreón and a delegation of men appeared at my door to ask me to go to the railway station to meet the president-elect, Don Francisco, and his wife when they arrived. I was surprised and rather pleased, and consented on condition that one or two of the American ladies in Cuernavaca go with me.

When the day came, the governor's carriage was sent for us, drawn by two most spirited horses. Now horses are one of the Mexican passions, and at this time they had a particular fascination for the Revolutionaries, because always before their possession had been limited to the ruling classes. For fear this fine pair would be seized by the Zapatistas, they had been kept upstairs in hiding, in a bedroom, for five or six weeks, and were so full of life they could hardly be driven. We passed through streets lined with Zapata's soldiers, and accustomed as I had become to these Indians, my heart rather failed me at the sight of them all together, with their heavy armament and their look of wild men of the woods.

When we reached the station the horses became very



BURNING HACIENDAS

CBILL

restive. General Emiliano Zapata, riding a beautiful horse, with his brother Eufemio beside him on another fine animal, gave the order for me to move.

I told him rather frankly that I would not move, as I had been requested by the governor of the state to await the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Madero. He did not insist, but sat silent with his long sensitive fingers quiet on the reins; a graceful figure of a man, with a kind of natural elegance. He was swarthy, as the men of Cuautla are apt to be, with beautiful white teeth beneath the heavy black moustache, and he wore the *charro* suit of the ranchman, always neat even when made up, as his was, in coarse materials.

As I look back now on that scene, — the calm assurance with which I stood firm upon a point of etiquette, and the simple manner in which the commanding general accepted my objections, — it seems to mark an epoch in the Revolution. In later years I should probably have been shot for countermanaging the orders of any chieftain. I do not believe that Zapata understood any more than I did, at this time, the full splendor of what he was doing, or that the day would come when, in the social emancipation of Mexico, he would stand third in rank after Hidalgo and Juarez.

The little black engine finally puffed its load of celebrities and soldiers into the station. As Mr. and Mrs. Madero stepped from their coach, there was a fusillade of shots from the soldiers on the train and an answering volley from the Zapatistas who lined

the street. Both volleys were friendly salutes, but the horses who had drawn us in such stately fashion to the station apparently thought otherwise. Less considerate of our dignity than the general, they reared, bucked, and finally dashed for home and safety — the driver struggling with the reins and an Englishwoman and two Americans struggling to catch their breath.

Shortly after, President Madero and Zapata met again at Cuautla, and on this occasion the president gave our general the famous *abrazo*, perhaps as a seal of what we had already heard, that he had promised to make Zapata governor of the state as evidence of his appreciation of all Zapata had done for the Madero cause. An *abrazo* is an embrace between two men who are considered true friends. The confidence between the leaders which this act implied promised peace for Cuernavaca, and when I heard the news, I said to myself, "The Revolution is over." I was equally pleased with the success of the Revolutionary movement and with the quick, rather orderly fashion in which the turnover had been accomplished.

But I spoke too soon. If the promise was made to Zapata, it was not kept; for the coveted office of governor was given to General Ambrosio Figueroa.

From this time on our troubles began in the State of Morelos. The Zapatistas swooped down on trains whenever and wherever they could. They galloped over the rich fields, destroying crops and millions

of dollars' worth of machinery imported from England and the United States; and woe to the *administradores* of the *haciendas* when they tried to resist the onslaught.



CHAPTER V

I WAS vexed rather than alarmed by the turn affairs had taken. We were safe in Cuernavaca, as Zapata had moved out of the town some time before his break with Madero, and the new governor, Figueroa, and his troops were well established among us. Yet we were inconvenienced by the raids in the outlying country. Traveling became unsafe and few people ventured far from home. My hotel business, which had already declined because of unsettled conditions, suffered still more. At the same time, I simply did not believe what the newspapers said, that the Zapatistas, who had lived among us so peaceably for weeks, had turned overnight into villainous desperadoes. Beneath their quite terrifying exteriors, the Zapatistas had seemed to me more like harmless and valiant children than anything else, and this sudden burst of destructiveness seemed to me a childish reaction to the slight they had suffered.

I know now that there was something more behind their defiance.

Victim of the *hacendados*, Emiliano Zapata had been constantly exasperated by the landowners, who reigned with all the despotism of feudal lords over the *peones* and working classes of the rural population. His personal experiences had inspired in him an ideal — “Land and Liberty” for the downtrodden Indian — which was perfectly clear to him, and which his followers comprehended to an extent that preserved their faith in their leader through all the strife that followed. The new governor, Figueroa, was himself an *hacendado*, the owner of great tracts of land in the State of Guerrero; and Zapata doubtless felt that such a man would not help the people of Morelos to realize their dream.

Personally, I liked our shy, serious young governor and believed him sincere. I think that he, like Madero, was a man of wealth who recognized his obligation to improve the lot of the masses. Looking back, it is easy to see that President Madero made a crucial blunder in passing by Zapata, and that this was the first of the rifts in the Revolutionary Party which later brought ruin on Madero and on the rest of us. But at this time Zapata was an almost unknown Indian, whose genius for leadership had not yet blazed forth to its full extent, and it is not surprising that the president should have believed Figueroa better suited for authority. We all regretted that the new governor’s first official job was the unpleasant one of putting down the men of the state.

For the rest, life in Cuernavaca took on a new interest.

The townspeople sympathized covertly with the Zapatistas, but were too sensible to say so openly. Though the disorders in our vicinity were very bad for my own business, since the hotel depended on transients, the town had never been so prosperous before as it was with six thousand Federal soldiers spending their pay. The newspapers talked constantly about the bravery of these troops and how the ragged rebels fled when they met them. The trouble was that the ragged rebels ran only as far as the nearest shelter, from behind which they sniped the Federals; and a good deal of fun was made of the professional soldiers behind their backs because they could never quite stamp out this guerrilla warfare. Figueroa was eventually recalled because he could not catch Zapata, and a succession of military commanders followed him.

We were very gay. The commanding general and his staff always stayed at the Bella Vista, and when the officers were not out fighting, they were dancing or drinking or gambling, and our quiet country town had never seen the like of it. I often wished for the old peaceful times and quieter civilian guests, but it was diverting to watch the antics of these reckless young blades.

They thought it great luck to be on campaign again, after it had seemed almost sure that the Revolution was over and there was nothing ahead of them

but a long, dull stretch of peace-time service. They played harebrained jokes on each other, and quarreled endlessly about the superiority of their favorite horses. They were all inordinately vain of their horsemanship, which was superb, and how they would make a horse prance when a pretty girl was looking! More alarming were the disputes they had about their marksmanship, for these were apt to end in a hasty, impromptu shooting match, when the bullets might take off the neck of the bottle set up at so many paces, and then again might miss it altogether.

They were always respectful and deferential to me, and took to calling me "*mamacita*" (little mother). This flattered and pleased me, in spite of the fact that I was not old enough to be their mother; for Mexican boys are devoted sons, and I knew they were paying me their highest compliment. I let them pour out their troubles to me, and tried to help them when I could.

Looking back, it always makes me happy to remember that even at this time my favorite among them was Captain Federico Chacón, who later turned out to be the best friend I had, and to whom I owe my life many times over. Federico Chacón was an upstanding, swashbuckling fellow from the north, who looked just like an American and was always being taken for one, which half disgusted and half pleased him. I was always scolding him about his bad habits, — for he had them all! — but I think he liked this, for no one had ever troubled before to tell him why

things should be done or not done from the stand-point of ethics. At any rate, he would listen very attentively. When I tried to explain to him that too much indulgence in some kinds of enjoyment was to enjoy life only in a small way, and that there was much more in life to live for, he said he would try to be more serious. But this was so hard for him, and he was such a fine, generous person with it all, that I really felt better when he slipped now and again into his old ways, after which he would return to apologize and ask for forgiveness.

I recall one day when I was sitting in my *portal* with a sedate, elderly British couple, who were feeling very adventurous because they had made the trip to Cuernavaca in spite of the raids of the Zapatistas in our district. Across the way, in the *portal* of the Hotel Morelos, Chacón sat drinking with a group of other men. Suddenly, as we sat idly watching them, a fight began. Over went a gentleman I recognized as a judge of the town. Chacón's driving shoulders thrust about in the midst of the tangle; a moment more and he had bowled over all five of them. He came striding out of the arcade, shaking himself like a big dog — head up, the way he always walked.

"By Jove, I can't help liking that man," said the mild-mannered gentleman at my side. "Do you think he'd come over and talk to us?"

I beckoned to Federico and he sat down with us and chatted over a *copita* — a small glass of cognac. Nothing that was said by him or anyone else made

any particular impression on me. The noteworthy thing about that conversation was the blank stare with which Federico greeted me the next morning when I recalled it. He had been so drunk all the time that he had no recollection whatever of the fight or what had followed.

Lively as Cuernavaca was with the *militares* in possession, it was hardly the setting I should have chosen for my young daughter. Both my daughter and son were now in boarding schools. My son went to school in Canada, and as the Revolution later destroyed our railroad communication with the countries to the north of us, it was a long while before he was able to return, and he does not enter this story at all. My daughter's school was in Tennessee, and when she came home for vacation I had kept her with me, because it was my wish to take her to England shortly and place her in the school that I had gone to.

It never occurred to me that I should not soon be able to take a holiday. I had implicit confidence that at any moment the ragged handful of Zapatistas with their blundering methods, as the newspapers described them, would be finally overcome by the brave Federals. But I did begin to chafe at the way the fighting dragged on, delaying our departure. My daughter was hardly more than a child, by English or American standards, but a very pretty one—*la guerrita* (the little fair one), the officers called her; and I did not want her head turned.

For this reason, I was glad when they told me that

Mexico City had determined to end the struggle. One of the best generals in the republic had been ordered to Cuernavaca and Zapata's fate was sealed.

One afternoon I heard a spirited firing of rifles, and saw from my window that the soldiers already stationed at Cuernavaca and the troops of the incoming general were firing at one another. This was a habit they had, and there was no reason behind it, I was sure, except that there was always more or less jealousy among contending troops, even though fighting in the same cause, and always bitter rivalry between their chiefs. The firing continued and, looking out from a place of safety, I saw a man conspicuously apart, sitting on a very fine horse. He sat as though made of iron, without a motion of his body, his face without a smile, almost without expression, as careless of the bullets flying around him as though they were feathers.

I said to my manager, "Who is that man on the beautiful horse, who sits there in a shower of bullets with no more fear than if they were raindrops?"

"That," said Willie respectfully, "is General Victoriano Huerta. There's nothing he's afraid of."

Later, when they had desisted from their little pastime of fighting and killing each other,—for General Huerta soon mastered the troops already with us, as he had good fresh horses and better rifles to help him,—he was brought to my house and introduced to me. I knew so little about the politics of the day that I did not realize General Huerta was one of the

most prominent men in the country, but it was plain to me that I had met a man of strong and decisive character.

General Huerta remained at the Bella Vista and it amused me to see the stiffening of the military morale when this dynamic leader took command. He allowed no laxness in his troops, but they adored him because he always led them to victory. He himself drank heavily, and nearly every evening had to be led off to bed; but he was always up in the morning bright and early, looking as though he were not even acquainted with the odor of drink.

I often saw him at breakfast and he would try to talk to me, telling me as much as he could of the state of affairs whilst we were peacefully eating *ciruelas* — the plums for which Cuernavaca is noted. The general and I were very fond of these plums and ate them every morning. Looking back, it seems a curious thing to me that this trivial taste that we shared should have played a part in the web of intrigue in which I later became entangled.

My Spanish was still so poor that I could not understand much that the general said, but I did make out that he always told me that he was going to capture Zapata.

The day the army was to set off on the crucial expedition, which required complete concentration of attention on the delicate manœuvrings that were planned, an American turned up who attempted to invite himself along. He said he had come from the

American Embassy in Mexico City, which was true, but I hardly think his government can have known what he was up to.

General Huerta was not at all taken with the stranger, a foreigner, who came among us, it seemed, only from motives of inquisitiveness, to gratify a personal curiosity about how Mexicans conducted their military campaigns. But the American — shall we call him Mr. Smith? — was too self-complacent to perceive that behind the general's courtesy there was an astuteness that had penetrated the impertinence of his request. He was quite insensitive to the general's polite rebuff and graceful invitation to take himself off, and insisted on joining Huerta and his officers to find out where they were going.

General Huerta came over to me and said, "Oh, Señora King, I am sure Mr. Smith would like to hear of your experiences in Mexico. I know you will entertain him for me. Mr. Smith, will you sit here with Mrs. King? Be kind enough to take this chair."

I naturally wished to help General Huerta. I knew the nervous tension he must be under because of the character of his errand, and could understand how this intrusion was annoying him.

Mr. Smith, however, did not seem to find me very interesting. He was more intent on finding out what he was after than on talking to me. In a few minutes he got up and went back to the general.

General Huerta turned to him with the air of one who has just seen the light. "Ah, *señor*," he said,

"you probably wish to ride out with us; do you not?"

Mr. Smith signified that that was his wish, and thought he had won his point and was going to be permitted to accompany the general and his officers on their campaign. General Huerta then turned to one of the officers and gave a rapid order for a horse to be brought. I did not understand what he said, but my manager, who could speak Spanish like a native, understood and said to me, "I am afraid they are going to play some trick on this man." I did not think it mattered much, as by his persistent intrusion where he was not welcome he had invited punishment.

A fine-looking horse was brought, with a handsome saddle. Mr. Smith went delightedly forward to mount, thinking surely he was to share the honors of the day. I then saw a spectacle such as I had never seen in my life. I do not understand how the man escaped alive. The horse bucked, jumping up and down, fore and aft, kicked, snorted, pawed the ground like a mad bull, stood on his hind feet pawing the air, stood on his tail and then on his head, leaped back and forth, flung himself right and left — made every frantic movement known to a horse mad from some unknown emotion. At last our man slid off, and indeed it was a mystery that he stayed on as long as he did.

Not a line of General Huerta's sphinx-like face changed. Without a smile he said, "My dear sir, I fear there is something wrong. I will have the horse unsaddled that we may see."

The saddle was removed in the presence of us all. Under the blanket were found three big thorns with which the horse was well pricked as soon as the man was in the saddle!

General Huerta's face was something never to be forgotten. A silent smile came over it — a thoughtful smile — even an innocent smile. But he only turned to me and said, "*Señora*, I do not think the gentleman will ride with us to-day."

It was all I could do to keep my laughter back, but it had to be done, for no one dared to make a sound or even to smile while the now abashed Mr. Smith went to his room, packed a valise, and left for Mexico City at the first opportunity. When will the foreigner learn that a Mexican's politeness can be as final as an American's curt "Get out!"

Whether or not this annoying incident had taken the edge off the general's keenness to start on the expedition, I do not know; but he took a drink and another drink. The troops were kept standing all that day in the pouring rain. When night came on, I could stand it no longer and sent out great pots of coffee to warm the poor fellows. Finally, at day-break, General Huerta got over his intoxication and was able to mount his horse. The troops moved off — artillery, infantry, and cavalry — to comb the mountains in search of Zapata.

I had got up to see them go, and as General Huerta said good-bye he assured me that he would be back in two or three days with the prisoner on exhibition.

He did return in a few days, but not with the prisoner as he had expected. I found out that he had actually succeeded in surrounding Zapata and his forces and was on the verge of closing in when a sharp order had come to him from President Madero to return at once with his troops to Mexico City. Huerta was very, very angry and like an Indian swore revenge on Madero. He felt he had been made a fool of. We all tread cautiously in the face of his wrath and hoped that it would blow over. I marveled at the incredible innocence of Mr. Madero, who seemed to think he could play fast and loose with men like this. He had made a foe of Zapata by just such an about-face, and now, to save Zapata, he had perhaps made a foe of the more formidable Huerta. But it never occurred to me that the relations of these two men would affect me personally.

General Huerta was his usual bland self when he left for Mexico City. "Never fear, Señora King," he said as he shook hands, "that the music will stop in the Zócalo because I am taking away my fine band that you like so much. I have given orders, and you shall have music every night as before." And indeed, whether this was the reason or not, from that time on, even when things were worst, a band played every night in the plaza.

We hoped that Huerta's serenity was a good omen, but I can see now that it was more likely the calm of resolution; and I myself believe that the seed had then taken root in him which later bore bloody fruit.

The evidence of a weak hand and a vacillating will in the capital did not help our situation in Cuernavaca. The morale of the soldiers was impaired by the suspicion that the government was not squarely behind them in their campaign. Some of them deserted and went over to the Zapatistas. The Zapatistas raided with new boldness and confidence, closer to the town. Our newspapers continued to print the usual reassuring accounts, but I could not help noticing that less was coming into the markets; which meant that surrounding villages were being cut off.

A charcoal seller who was a Zapatista, and perhaps a spy, said to me one day, "*Señora*, they always say we are running away and being killed, but they do not tell how many we catch and kill when we are hiding in places where we can shoot on them." This was translated to me in a significant tone by Willie Nevin, my manager, his eyes frightfully crossed as they would become when he was upset.

Although the Federal officers who lived at my hotel continued to be courteous and affable to me, I could see that the campaign was being pushed harder. None of the succession of generals who followed Huerta seemed able to cope with the wily Zapata and his constantly growing bands of untrained Indians. The rebels knew all the mountains and *barrancas* and shot from ambush. The skilled tactics of the Federals were useless against this kind of guerilla warfare, and the ease with which the rebels

picked off their comrades seemed to madden the Federal soldiers. They burned the crops that sustained the rebels and the houses or huts that sheltered them, and shot in their turn at anyone wearing the white *calzones* of the *peon*. Zapata's men not only fought; they had, in between, to work to provide for their families, cultivating their patches of corn and beans. My friend Federico Chacón told me how many of these men were surrounded by Federals while thus working unprotected in the fields. They were made prisoners and driven to the nearest towns, where they were forced to dig their own graves before they were shot — if one can call "graves" the holes into which their bodies were thrown.

Long afterward, in Cuautla, a mason who was working for me told me how the Federals, in the name of the Revolutionary government, had come unexpectedly upon the little piece of ground his father owned, and had shot his father dead before his eyes and his mother's, and then set fire to their poor hut, all to steal the corn they had planted. He and his mother fled, hiding in the fields and woods, anywhere for safety, until they could find Emiliano Zapata, the protector and avenger. The boy was only fifteen at the time, but his father lay dead and his home was in ruins. The Zapatistas gave him a gun. "With my gun in hand and hatred in my heart, I killed and destroyed wherever I could," he told me.

One day I had occasion to go up to Mexico City with my daughter Vera. We were going on the

military train, since regular trains were often attacked in the mountains. As I stood looking at the soldiers who filled the first car and bristled on the roofs and running boards of all the cars, and on the cow-catcher, I wondered whether the sight of such an escort aroused in me a feeling of security or of greater trepidation. Just then a young colonel I knew came up and proudly invited me to see some prisoners he had captured.

Never shall I forget the sight of those poor wretches standing tied together, not one uttering a word; looking like the farmers they were, caught unprotected in their *milpas*.

"The only way we can quiet down Morelos," explained the colonel, "is to ship out these Zapatistas. If we break up families doing it — well, our families have lost their husbands and fathers, too. I tell you, *señora*, when these warlike rebels find themselves a thousand miles from home with nothing to eat and no place to go, among people who speak a different dialect, they will not be so brave!"

"Oh," I said, trembling with indignation, "how can you be so cruel? How can you teach them to respect the government if you are not better than they?"

The soldiers were hustling the poor wretches into a cattle box car, pushing them in till there was not even standing room. They boarded up the doors and nailed them shut. Vera turned away and would not look, but I had seen in the car an Indian who had



HANGED MEN



worked for me for four or five years, faithfully, and I began to protest very bitterly.

"They will smother, Colonel Lugo, before they reach their destination!" I cried, with a kind of presentiment — for four or five in that car were later found dead, among them Pepe, my servant.

The colonel shrugged and turned away. "Orders," he said briefly.

Down the way I saw the commander, General Robles, inspecting the guard on the train. He lived at my house, and a few days before, on my birthday, he had commanded the military band to play in the dawn, beneath my windows, the softly swelling "Mañanitas" — the birthday serenade.

I rushed up to him. "Oh, General Robles," I said, tears streaming down my face, "you don't know what they're doing. Make them let those poor people go."

To my horror, he smiled. "Now, now, *señora*," he chided indulgently, patting my arm, "you must not take it so hard. You are only a woman and you do not understand these things. Why, I am trying to clean up your beautiful Morelos for you. What a nice place it will be once we get rid of the *Morelenses*! If they resist me, I shall hang them like ear-rings to the trees."

And being what they are, the people of Morelos did resist his will to wrench them from their beloved soil. The women cooled and reloaded the guns and scoured the country for food for the fighting men,

and old people and young children endured the hardships of their lot without complaint. The Zapatistas were not an army; they were a people in arms.

Those of the rebels he caught, General Robles strung up on the trees, where their companions could see them, and the passengers on the trains that passed that way. My daughter and I often saw the sickening sight of bodies swinging in the air. At that high altitude they did not decompose, but dried up into mummies, grotesque *things* with the toes hanging straight down in death and hair and beard still growing. We thought at first we could not live among such sights; but, as I look back, I realize that the worst part of all was that in time we grew hardened to them and they no longer bothered us.

The savage persecution by the Federals, who seemed to have lost all sight of the fact that they too were supposed to be Revolutionaries, champions of freedom and justice for all, turned the Zapatistas into fighting demons. Our newspapers lashed on the Federals with tales of atrocities committed by the rebels. I think this was largely propaganda, but if there was some truth in the tales, the acts were retaliation for the cruelty of the Federals, who should have known better, and if I had been one of those ignorant, hounded people, I think I should have acted as they did.

The rebel forces continued to grow, swelled by deserters from the government ranks, and Zapata raided to the very edge of the town. We were safe in

the Bella Vista only because it was located in the very heart of the town. Willie Nevin's mother had long been begging him to leave Cuernavaca, and he now decided to accede to her wish. I was left without a manager, which in itself was not so serious, as goodness knows I had little enough business in the hotel. I had shut down the tearoom altogether, the *militares* preferring stronger drinks than tea, and the pottery factory had been abandoned. Nevertheless, there had been a certain comfort in knowing that a man of my own people was close at hand.

It was then that I began to appreciate the man that Chacón was. Hitherto I had regarded him more or less as a scapegrace one could n't help liking. Now Federico constituted himself the protector of Vera and myself because, he said, I reminded him of his own mother; and I began to understand as never before that beneath his incorrigible gayety there was a steady loyalty and devotion that was not common. Nothing that would reassure us was too much trouble for him, but he carried off his little acts of kindness with a brusque nonchalance that was in itself a tonic.

One night when my drawing-room was full of people, we heard the sound of heavy firing alarmingly close, on the edge of the town. Chacón received orders to start out with his men at once, and the other officers likewise prepared to join their troops. Before he left, Federico came to me hurriedly and said, "Mother," — he always called me "Mother" in

English, not Spanish like the others, — “Mother, play the piano and keep the women quiet; and remember, if we are driven back, wait for me, and I will take you and Vera to safety.”

I sat down at the piano and played then, but I could see that my audience was only half listening. Their ears were strained to catch the crack of rifle fire that sounded when my swelling chords sank to *pianissimo*. Nearly all the men had gone to fight, and what I saw before me was a group of women, forlorn and frightened-looking. One superb brunette, however, stood at the window and looked down the street, dramatically fingering the crucifix she wore about her neck. “Doña Luz is going to be tragic!” I thought. “She will upset the few who still are calm, and throw the others into a panic.” I knew I had to think quickly.

“Heavens, ladies,” I rallied them, “how dismal you look! Your men have only gone to fight; one would think they were courting other girls! Come, let us try to be gay by ourselves, or they will find out how much we miss them. . . . Señora García, Señorita Mendoza,” — I was dragooning the timidest, — “come sing for us! Doña Luz, we need your rich contralto.”

As the sound of shooting grew louder, I demanded more spirit of my chorus. The songs I played grew “louder and funnier,” as the Americans say. Finally I swung into the joyous “Jarabe Tapatío,” and the rollicking strains of the national dance brought all

of them out on the floor in an impromptu, helter-skelter *baile* (dance).

All the while I was thinking that if Federico lived, he would come back for Vera and me and take us to safety, no matter how difficult that might be. But thanks to God's goodness, it was the enemy that was driven back after three hours of hard fighting.

Another day, when there was fighting on the outskirts of the town, the Zapatistas galloped past my windows shouting their bloodcurdling cry "*Mueran los gachupines!*" (Death to the Spaniards) — a class to them, as much as a nationality, whom they held responsible for their suffering.

Chacón was out with his troops and I did not know where to turn. I called a servant, Julio, who looked braver than the rest, and placed him close to my daughter and me with a pistol in his hand. I told him to fire if the enemy came, while Vera and I ran out the back way.

To our great relief, however, the Zapatistas did not return. When Federico came home I told him how frightened I had been, but what presence of mind I had shown. I brought out the pistol I had found for Julio to use in our defense. Federico pretended to be much impressed and stretched out his hand for the pistol, which he had seen before. His laughter was good to hear when he showed me that it was empty.

But after that, I kept the pistol loaded.



CHAPTER VI

To our relief, a new commander, General Angeles, was sent to us. As I look back, the months of his command mark an interlude when something of the old peace returned briefly to Cuernavaca before our little world crashed about our ears. General Felipe Angeles was slender and rather tall, not very dark, more of the paleness of the better class of Mexican, with delicate features and the kindest eyes I think I have ever seen in any man. He called himself an Indian, laughingly, but he was decidedly the type the Mexicans call *indio triste* (sad Indian). Another great attraction was his charming voice and manners.

From the moment General Angeles was introduced to me, I felt in him a quality that I had missed in his predecessors, a quality of mercy and a willingness to understand. I liked him, even before I heard through the junior officers that he would not tolerate any cruelty or injustice on the part of his soldiers. I had no idea that our casual conversations were the beginning of a friendship for him and his family that

would draw me into the current of the Revolution.

The Zapatistas, finding they were no longer so harshly pressed, left off their desperate raiding into the town. There was still fighting outside, but not so much of it as before; and, what there was, less bitter and violent.

One day when General Angeles and I were speaking of the suffering of the poor Indians against whom he was campaigning, he said to me with a very sad face, "Señora King, I am a general, but I am only an Indian." He was indeed an Indian and looked it — a fine-looking man of his type, educated in France. "I would give anything," he said earnestly, "to show these people the mistake they are making. President Madero is doing his best for them, but he needs coöperation. The conservatives, using all the tricks of politics, fight him at every step, and how can he force through his reforms if the people he wants to help will not back him?"

For Angeles never forgot that Zapata and Madero had once worked together for the common goal — liberty, justice, and decent living conditions for the masses; and he saw it for the tragedy it was that their followers, Revolutionaries all, had turned their guns on one another. He was criticized in some quarters for not setting out to annihilate Zapata, as he was known to be a strong commander, the best artillery-man in Mexico and the inventor of a powerful cannon. Such comments always made me angry, for I felt that his attitude showed a deeper and more dis-

cerning loyalty to President Madero and what he stood for.

One morning he came to me, looking very happy, and said, "Oh, Señora King, my wife and her sister and two of my sons are coming down to Cuernavaca for a little visit. They will arrive this afternoon, but it will be impossible for me to meet the train. Would you be so kind as to receive them for me?"

My carriage was just about to drive off to the station when my *cantinero* rushed out, looking very agitated, and stopped the coachman. I got out quickly, and he told us that word had just come that the train with Señora Angeles and her party on it had been attacked in the mountains. General Angeles left at once with a body of troops on a special military train, with the rest of us wondering anxiously whether he would arrive in time to save his wife and children, or whether they would be carried off by the enemy.

What a relief and joy it was to us when we saw the whole party arriving at our door an hour or two later! The general's usually sober face was beaming. Poor Señora Angeles and her sister were in rather battered condition, their long traveling dresses torn and muddy, but apparently safe and sound, and the two little fellows, twins they were, were strutting with importance.

Señora Angeles was a woman who would have attracted attention in any country by her grace and beauty. Her courage and a sweet gayety of manner

that had not deserted her even under these circumstances drew me to her at once. She spoke English very well and, tired and shaken as she must have felt, she would not go upstairs until she had given me a spirited account of their adventure. The general, it seemed, had arrived just in time.

When Señora Angeles and her sister felt the train suddenly stop and heard the first shots fired in front, near the engine, they had guessed at once what was happening. Each had been quick to seize one of the little boys by the hand and run to the back end of the train before the enemy could force their way through. They jumped off and, under cover of the fighting that was going on up front, made their way to a thicket and hid there in the brush until they saw a chance to run with safety in the direction of Cuernavaca. After running and hiding for some distance in this manner, they at last saw the relief train nearing, which frightened the Zapatistas away, and knew they were saved.

"Never have I played hide and seek in the bushes that way since I was a little girl," finished Señora Angeles, looking ruefully at her skirt, torn by brambles. "But I cannot run so fast any more, and sister is not so quick either!"

She stayed with us for a month, and a deep friendship sprang up between her and myself. Her father was a German, and the sister took after him, being fair and calm in manner; but Señora Angeles was all

Mexican, like their mother, with silky, curly black hair and glorious dark eyes.

Her first greeting to me in the morning would be, "Oh, Mrs. King, what can we do to-day? I feel we should be gay and not even think of troubles."

Then we would go for tea in the romantic Borda Gardens, or for horseback rides and picnics in the country — but only a little way beyond the outskirts of the town, as General Angeles would on no account permit us to go far away from him. He was not going to have his precious wife fall into the hands of the Zapatistas! Her presence had made a great change in him, and I was glad to see his serious and thoughtful expression lightened.

Señora Angeles and I were sitting quietly in a shady corner of the patio one afternoon, listening to the dropping of the water in the fountain, and watching the glistening whir of the humming birds as they stabbed at the roses with their long slender beaks. Suddenly the twins came tearing in, very excited, followed by their smiling nurse.

"*Mira, mamacita! Mira!*" they shrieked. They had a brand-new ball covered in leather pied in segments of red and yellow, which one of the officers had brought them from Mexico City.

"*Qué bueno!*" (How nice), said their mother, taking the ball and admiring it. "*Sabéis agarrarla?*" (Do you know how to catch?) and she tossed it gayly. The boys scrambled for the bright ball and one of them came rushing back with it.

After a while the nurse broke up the hilarious three-cornered game and took the boys off for their walk.

Señora Angeles lay back in her big chair shaking with laughter, and brushed back a loosened tendril of hair from her damp forehead. "See, Señora King! They think they are walking just like their father! My sweet, funny babies." Then swiftly her mood changed. She said softly almost to herself, "Oh, I do love my children, and my family — but not like Felipe. . . . If I seem to you a giddy woman, Señora King, it is because always I am afraid for him. If anything should happen to Felipe, I think I could not live." Without moving her quiet body, she suddenly turned her head half around so that her cheek lay against the braided chair back, and looked at me searchingly out of enormous eyes. "Do you think, *amiguita*, that if — something should happen to Felipe, God would make me go on living without him?"

This eerie question put by my usually merry friend was too much for me. I told her sternly that she must not think of such dreadful things or she would have us all upset; and she never spoke of the matter again. But her question was often in my mind as I watched her with her husband, and I had a premonition that I should live to see it answered.

As the time of her visit drew to a close, we determined to end it in one last burst of gayety. She felt and I felt that it was up to us women to make life as

pleasant and gracious as possible for the poor fellows who went out to fight, and sometimes to die, that we might be safe.

I shall never forget the dance we gave in the theatre, the biggest place we could find in Cuernavaca. As the time was just before Christmas, we made it a *Posada* party. Originally the *Posada* parties, given during the ten days before Christmas, were religious in character, representing the festivity in the inns of Bethlehem, filled to the rafters, when Mary and Joseph came to seek lodging for themselves and the coming Christ child. In the small towns the images of the holy family were always brought in during the course of the evening; but in the cities the *Posadas* are now merely holiday parties, and a social event much looked forward to by the young.

Señora Angeles was like a child in her enjoyment of the preparations. She and my schoolgirl daughter Vera planned all the details, and did not leave the general and myself much to say about the party. It is a custom at the *Posada* feasts to pass trays filled with presents, which are sometimes very handsome and costly and at other times quite simple and inexpensive. Señora Angeles and Vera made a mysterious trip to Mexico City, from which they returned laden with decorations and favors they had bought in a Japanese shop. When they were through, the floor of the old theatre, which had been cleared for dancing, was softly lit by Japanese lanterns; and colorful umbrellas, with lights behind them, flaunted them-

selves in the nooks and corners. As each girl arrived, she was given a fan to flirt with. Never shall I forget the enjoyment of my friend and my daughter as they gave away the little gifts they had bought!

They had asked the general and me to decorate the stage for the buffet supper. This was not very difficult for us, as the soldiers did the actual work, but when they had finished the supper tables were lovely, set in a bower of tropical plants and vivid flowers, the free gift of our beautiful country, with hundreds of tiny electric lights twinkling in the foliage. Four of my waiters, looking very smart in their black jackets and the famous white gloves, stood behind them, ready to serve the guests. The military band played the music for the dancing; a fine band, doing their best for the general and his lovely, gentle wife, pouring out the slow rhythm and intricate sweetness of *danzas* and two-steps then in vogue as if they had never played anything harsher.

Such a dance, I think, had never in those days been given in Cuernavaca, and the girls of the town were starry-eyed. That happy night, when all thought of war was pushed outside the circle of light, and soldiers and townspeople yielded to joy!

After Señora Angeles left, we grew more sober again. I was not afraid of the Zapatistas with General Angeles protecting us, but the reports that all was not well in Mexico City began to grow more insistent. There had always been a faction openly hostile to Madero, and he had made the mistake of allowing a num-

ber of people appointed by Díaz to retain their posts. The success of his Revolution, moreover, had attracted the unscrupulous and self-seeking; and many reactionaries hypocritically disguised as liberals had climbed on the band wagon hoping to get control of the government. Mr. Madero and his original group of idealists were having to contend with the duplicity of people much better versed in politics than themselves. As a result Madero was able to make little progress with his reforms, and the masses, so often betrayed before, were beginning to doubt his will to help them. This saddened Angeles, who was devoted to the president.

"He is such a good man, Mrs. King," he would tell me earnestly. "Too good, perhaps, for the rest of us. He does not understand how evil and deceitful men can be."

Angeles himself was doing all he could to make terms with the outlaw Zapata and to induce him to return to the support of the president. Fantastic rumors of the disloyalty of prominent men in the government itself began to reach us in Cuernavaca. Most of these rumors were so far-fetched that we gave them little credence. "Well, what has come out of the factory, now?" was our cynical question when a newcomer arrived from Mexico City.

One Sunday afternoon, as I was coming down my staircase, I was met by a very smart-looking officer, a stranger to me, who addressed me in perfect English. He asked if I was Mrs. King, and upon

learning that I was, told me that President Madero was coming down to Cuernavaca for a night, and he wished to make arrangements for him and his party to stay at the Bella Vista. I was quite surprised. President Madero had often come down to Cuernavaca before, and nearly always when he was in town he came over with Mrs. Madero to see me. But he had never stopped at the Bella Vista, always at the house of his friend, Mr. Carreón.

My surprise must have shown in my face, for the officer said frankly, "Mrs. King, the president must not stay in a private house. His life is in danger. We want you to take him under the protection of your roof and the British flag while he is in Cuernavaca."

I knew then that matters were more serious than I had believed, if the president of the republic needed the protection of a foreign flag.

At first I would not consent to take him in. I did not feel that I, as a private citizen of Great Britain, could assume such responsibility. I liked Mr. Madero and simple, unaffected Mrs. Madero, but I was reluctant to be drawn into the politics of a country in which I was a foreigner. Moreover, it seemed very likely to me that the devotion of this officer to his friend the president had caused him to exaggerate the danger to Mr. Madero.

"Oh, Mrs. King," the man said finally, "General Angeles sent me to you and said he knew you would do all you could to help us."

When he said that Angeles had sent him, I knew the danger to the president must be real. I was now rather frightened. But I was so fond of Señora Angeles and had such respect for the general that I felt I could not let him down. I gave my consent.

The British flag was run up over the Bella Vista and a strong guard of soldiers surrounded the house in preparation for our distinguished visitor. More soldiers were stationed inside and no one was allowed to pass in or out without permission. None of my servants was to be permitted to approach the president with the exception of my Indian boy and my Chinese cook, in both of whom I had perfect confidence. I was so nervous that I could hardly keep out of the kitchen. I had given the cook the most minute orders about the preparation of the president's food, that everything must be cooked in oil or he could not eat it, and I had warned him repeatedly that he must not under any circumstances permit any of the servants to go near the cooking utensils. I was afraid that one of them might take a bribe, and I was in mortal fear that someone would poison poor Mr. Madero under my roof.

The president and his party arrived at the Bella Vista late Tuesday afternoon. As he came in, followed by several officers, among them Felipe Angeles, who all looked very grave, I saw that Mr. Madero too seemed unhappy and depressed, quite unlike his usual self. When he saw me, he spoke with something of his old bright cheerfulness.

"Oh, Mrs. King, I'm so hungry. Have you something good for dinner?"

I answered as lightly as I could, but my heart was heavy. At the first opportunity I drew Angeles aside and asked him what had happened. Then he told me about the terrible insurrection that had broken out in Mexico City early Sunday morning, February 9. Díaz adherents, leagued with some of Madero's own officers, had attempted to surprise and capture the National Palace. Their attempt had failed, thanks to the presence of mind and courage of the commander in chief inside; but in the shock of alarm, not knowing whom they could trust, the Federals had turned the rapid-firing guns of the Palace in every direction over the Zócalo, the great plaza on which the Palace fronts, and hundreds of innocent people who were just leaving the Cathedral after early Mass had been mown down by the bullets. The rebels had succeeded in seizing the armory and ammunition stores and had turned a merciless fusillade against the public buildings and private houses of the city in an effort to force the government to terms. Sunday night and Monday had passed quietly, but President Madero realized that he did not have enough troops to protect him, and that at any moment new traitors might be uncovered in the ranks still counted loyal. His brave and devoted commander in chief had been terribly wounded in the fighting. He had then determined to come to Cuernavaca to get General Angeles and his troops, on whom he knew he could rely.

"And so," finished Angeles, "we go to join Huerta, the new commander in chief."

"Huerta!" I said, and the sound of the name was like a bell tolling. I had a remembrance of Huerta's face when he returned from his ill-fated campaign without his prisoner Zapata.

Angeles's eyes met mine, and he turned away.

While the president and his party were at dinner, a servant came and told me that a sullen crowd was forming outside in the plaza, murmuring against the president, saying that he had not kept the promises he had made to the people. The crowd grew larger and larger and the indistinguishable murmur swelled. There were hisses and cries of "Death to Madero!"

The president was talking to me in the drawing-room when he heard these cries. He jumped up immediately, saying, "Mrs. King, I must go out on the balcony and speak to them."

I begged him not to go and sent quickly for General Angeles, who I thought would have more influence over him than I. Angeles came hurriedly and would not hear of Madero addressing the crowd. He finally persuaded the president to let him go and talk to the people, which he did, and soon quieted them down. No one knows the relief I felt when he came in again to us and said that the people had dispersed and were going back to their homes. His manner was very quiet and easy, as though the matter had been of no consequence, and as though he had not risked his own life. Seeing the two men to-

gether there in my drawing-room, the soldier and his frail-looking chief with the good face, it struck me that in the love Angeles had for Madero there was much of the protective feeling of a big boy for a little boy who is in for it.

Angeles made one last effort to win back Zapata to Madero, but without success. Zapata refused to be drawn into the whirlpool of national affairs. He said, in effect, "What has your Revolution accomplished? Mine gets results." Madero had made the mistake of trying to fight the conservatives on their own ground. Zapata, more astute, struck at the wealth wherein their power lay, and so disarmed the oppressive classes.

The president and his party left the next evening. As he shook hands with me to say good-bye, I said, "God bless you, Mr. Madero, I wish you all good fortune," but I was filled with foreboding.

Something of this must have shown in my face, for Mr. Madero said, "Why, Mrs. King, of course I am safe. I have all my troops with me." I tried to look a little more cheerful as I bade farewell to Angeles. The general asked me to have all his papers and belongings packed and taken care of for him. As I gave him my promise, it occurred to me that this meant he realized that he, as well as the president, might never return to Cuernavaca.

And so, on the twelfth of February, the president of Mexico left our town with about nine thousand soldiers and we were left in the care of Colonel García

Lugo and some two hundred and fifty men — mere boys. We found out, however, that Angeles had managed to send word to Zapata and also money, which the Zapatistas always lacked, and Zapata had promised that he would attack neither the president on his return journey to Mexico City nor the men, women, and little children left unguarded in Cuernavaca. This made us feel safe, for the time being at least, as Zapata was always known to keep a promise.

Disconnected, contrary reports filtered in from Mexico City. Fighting had begun again. All was quiet. General Huerta, speaking for the government, assured the country that the rebellion was well in hand. Refugees cried out that the city ran blood. There was a rumor that the president had resigned. And then came the news that we had been dreading but expecting: —

“On the evening of February 22, the President and Vice President of the Republic were *accidentally struck and killed* by bullets during a street riot. . . .”

The news was given out by Victoriano Huerta, *presidente interino* — temporary president.

With a premonition that all would not be well with us now in Cuernavaca, I went with my daughter to Mexico City to ascertain the real state of affairs, and to find out whether it would be safe for us to remain at the Bella Vista.



CHAPTER VII

WHEN we reached the capital, I signaled a cab and told the driver to take us at once to my brother-in-law's house. I remember that he looked at me rather oddly when I gave the address, but I paid no attention to him. I was too shocked by the havoc that had been wrought in the city to think of anything else. Everywhere I saw houses with no glass in the windows, the plaster pitted with bullets. As we drove on there was increasing evidence of heavy cannonading. My brother-in-law's house had stood in the direct line of fire, and when I saw what was left of it I realized how terrible the fighting must have been.

"Go at once to the suburb of San Angel," I told the driver "— and hurry!" There to my great relief we found my brother-in-law and his family all safe and thankful to have escaped with their lives. They told me about the ten terrible days that have gone down in Mexican history as the *Decena Trágica* (the tragic ten days) which preceded the assassina-

tion of President Madero — for assassination it was, and no one had for a moment believed otherwise.

The insurrectionists had trained their guns on the old Prison of Belen, a fortress built by the Spaniards, and turned loose on the city its two thousand prisoners, criminals of every type. The electric wires were down. The city was in almost complete darkness. At times this darkness was fearfully lightened by the funeral pyres of those who had been killed in the streets. There was no burying anyone; petroleum was sprinkled on the bodies and they were burned where they lay. Armistice was given occasionally for an hour or two a day, when cooks were to be seen dodging bullets, hiding behind any available shelter as they scurried about to find something to eat for their masters. It was during such an armistice that my brother-in-law and his family had managed to escape to San Angel.

The real circumstances of poor Mr. Madero's death were not known, and contradictory stories were whispered about. All that was sure was that, after ten days of fighting, President Madero and Vice President Pino Suárez had been made prisoners, along with certain cabinet members and loyal military men, among them Angeles. The luckless president and vice president had finally been induced to sign their resignations. The resignations were then hastily forced through Congress, where only a handful of Representatives showed the courage to stand up to the conspirators and demand that the resignations be

offered properly in person. The same spineless Congress had stood by while Victoriano Huerta was named *presidente interino* until a new election could be held.

As temporary president, it was Huerta's obligation to see that Madero and Suárez, a man who had never meddled in politics and who had accepted the vice presidency only because of his loyalty to Madero, were conducted safely out of the country. In spite of the pressure of Madero's friends and relatives, Huerta delayed the preparations for the departure. A kind of reign of terror set in meanwhile, and summary unexplained executions of Madero's brother and other prominent members of his government prepared the people of the city for the violent death of the president.

Everyone about me was asking: "What will happen now?"

"And Angeles," I said to my brother-in-law. "What of him?"

"No one knows," he answered gravely. "He was released from prison and disappeared. Perhaps he is in hiding, and perhaps he is dead — the victim of another 'unofficial' execution."

I at once set about trying to find my friend. I was anxious to assure myself of his safety and also to ask his advice about staying in Cuernavaca.

The task I had set myself proved very difficult. Angeles was in hiding for his life. With the city full of Huerta's spies and snipers, who dropped un-

erring "stray" bullets from the house tops on his enemies, Angeles was actually less safe at liberty than he had been in prison, where there could be no secret as to who ordered the executions. For this reason, those of Angeles's friends who knew where he was hidden pretended ignorance. Finally, by dint of much patience and finesse, I found out what I needed to know. I was brought to Angeles's hiding place by a long, roundabout route to throw off anyone who might have followed us, and to this day I cannot say in what section of the city we were — only that I found the general and Mrs. Angeles in a small house on a quiet street, somewhere near the outskirts of the city. Never shall I forget the suffering on Angeles's face when he peeped out at me from a small barred window and made a sign that he wished to speak to me. He looked years older than on the day I had said good-bye to him in Cuernavaca several weeks before.

He told me that he himself had been a prisoner with the president and vice president in a small room over one of the entrances to the National Palace. Here, with inconceivable duplicity, Huerta had come to visit President Madero, who at last called him by his true name — "traitor." On the fatal evening of the twenty-second, General Huerta's representatives had come to "transfer Madero and Suárez to the penitentiary, where they would be safer."

As they were leaving the room, the president turned to Angeles and said, "*Adiós*, my general, I shall

never see you again." They knew they were going to their death.

Angeles listened to the sound of their footsteps dying away, and waited. He tried to trace their journey, step by step. From time to time he took out his watch and looked at it. He was tormented, he told me, by the thought, "I will not even know when it happens—or can it have happened already?"

Later, the jailers came and released him, without explanation. He was not surprised to learn, in the streets, that what he dreaded had come to pass. His beloved chief was dead.

It was not until years afterward that I heard the details of the shameful murder, from the lips of a man I knew who was in the business of renting out automobiles. Two of his cars had been hired that evening, and one of the chauffeurs told him afterward how the president was put in one car and the vice president in the other. Just as they reached a lonely spot behind the penitentiary wall, an armed group—police, they were, as a matter of fact, in disguise—pretended to attack the party, firing into the air. Madero was told by his guards to alight quickly so as not to be injured. As soon as he stepped out of the automobile, they shot him in the back of the head and he fell mortally wounded. Pino Suárez, understanding what had occurred, refused to alight, but was forced out and likewise shot down.

"The treachery," said Angeles—"that was what

took the heart out of a man. It is one thing, Señora King, to face an enemy; but to look into the guns of — friends!" He got up and began to pace restlessly up and down the room; and I saw in his strides how confinement in that narrow house was wearing on him, accustomed as he was to action. "Imagine if you can, *señora*, the moment when I opened fire on the Ciudadela and discovered that the focus of my cannon had been secretly destroyed! And poor Castillo and his men — ordered by Huerta to the corner of Balderas and Morelos, where he knew they would be blown to pieces."

Hoping to divert his bitter train of thought, I turned the conversation to the seriousness of present conditions in the city, homeless persons and shortage of food. I was immediately sorry. He stopped in his tracks, and I read in his lined face that I had conjured up memories of the misery and suffering, the injury and death, of innocent persons caught in the way of the fighting.

"God forgive us for what we have done to this city, all of us!" said Angeles. "You, at least, *señora*, know that I did my share only to save my beloved chief. And now he lies dead, and Huerta — Huerta! — sits in his place." He was striding again, faster and faster, back and forth, shaken to the core.

"Oh," said Angeles, "if I had ten thousand men and a few big guns! . . ."

Poor Señora Angeles had been watching his every change of expression. Now she burst out, "If you

were only out of it all! Safe in Cuba or New York." She was a ghost of herself, all eyes.

The general laid his hand on her arm very gently, and looked at her. She faced him for a moment in a kind of desperation, then turned away.

"The snipers will not get me this time," said the general calmly. "I shall live to come back!"

I had been warned not to stay long at the house lest I draw suspicion upon it, and I prepared to leave. As we shook hands the general looked at me very seriously and said earnestly: —

"Señora King, please do not stay in the city. Take Vera and go back to Cuernavaca. If it is known you are in the city you are probably being watched, for Huerta knows of your friendship for us and that you gave protection to Don Francisco Madero."

"But I am a foreigner," I said, startled.

"Even so . . ." said my friend.

Señora Angeles followed me to the door, so white and woebegone that my heart ached for her. She did not say a word, just put her arms around me and wept the tears she would not shed before her husband.

Angeles's advice that Vera and I return to Cuernavaca disturbed me considerably, for I knew it was only given for our good. We left the city at the first opportunity.

On reaching home, I found a kind of uneasiness pervading Cuernavaca. As yet there was nothing on which one could put a finger. The change of government had meant a new commander, that was

all. The loyalty of the soldiers was always only to their immediate chief, and they were little concerned with anyone so remote as a president. The common people of the town called soldiers of all factions, even the Zapatistas, "*el gobierno*," and their attitude toward them was one of resignation mingled with contempt.

The substantial people of the town, intelligent and informed, were deeply shocked by Madero's assassination, and talking hopefully to keep up their courage. Huerta, perhaps, would be able to maintain a stable government where the idealistic but impractical Madero had failed. Now that he was firmly entrenched as president, Huerta could afford to leave off the bloody practices which had brought him into power. We quoted to one another the remark Porfirio Díaz was said to have made when Huerta was escorting the fugitive dictator and his wife aboard the *Ipiranga*: "There is the man who will be able to control my people."

All who could were leaving Cuernavaca. Foreigners with sufficient income to live elsewhere moved on. The British and American companies began to recall their people. I could not leave because everything I had was tied up in the Bella Vista.

It was a strange campaign. Anyone coming into town would have thought we were enjoying the most peaceful days Mexico had ever known. There was music in the plaza, feasting in the palace of the governor, plays and dancing in the theatres.

One evening Federico Chacón invited Vera and me to go to the movies. We accepted gladly, being very fond of the movies. But, "Heavens," I thought, "since when has Federico developed a taste for such tame diversions!"

The picture was a noted one, *Sangre de Hermanos* (Blood of Brothers), and had a great vogue. Far from surfeiting us all with bloodshed, the excitement of the times seemed to rouse a craving for still stronger stimuli. What was our surprise, in the midst of the picture, to see suddenly flashed upon the screen Federico himself at the head of his troops, swinging his sword around his head as he led a charge!

In the outlying country there were fierce encounters between the Federal forces and the Zapatistas. The constant change of commanders in Cuernavaca suggested that the Zapatistas were gaining ground and that the perpetually encouraging stories printed in the newspapers were not true. Since Huerta had usurped the presidency by foul means, people flocked to Zapata. He was gaining not only fighting men, but also keen and well-informed advisers; for I know now that from this time on prominent men in Mexico City secretly gave him information, because they hated Huerta.

Those like myself who dared not desert their interests began to think of ways to escape if the worst came to the worst. Not only valuable thoroughbred horses, like those of Mr. Carreón which had run away with me so ingloriously, were kept hidden up-

stairs in bedrooms, but nags and mules as well. Today I often laugh when I pass these large old two-story houses and think how the animals looked nodding and wagging their heads from the upper windows at the passers-by, no doubt wondering what it all meant and having a much better time than their masters living downstairs in continual fear of having to bolt at any moment on their backs.

Personally, I could not feel that my life was in danger or that anyone would do me deliberate harm. The Zapatistas had treated me very well when they occupied the town four years before. I had always dealt fairly with the Indians and felt that I had their respect — the affection, even, of those of them who had worked for me. And of course the thought that underlay all my confidence was: I am an English-woman; I am outside this Revolution. My worry was that in the course of the fighting accidental damage might be done to my property. It was hardly likely that my daughter and I would experience any unpleasantness, no matter what happened. At the same time, I realized that times were not normal and it was well to avoid unnecessary risk.

The gayety in Cuernavaca was rapidly rising to the pitch of hysteria. It hinted, too clearly for comfort, "To-morrow we die." I felt I must know the real situation, and there was no one in our town who could or would tell me how matters stood. There was only one person I knew who could speak with authority on these things.

Friend of Angeles or not, and hostess to Madero, I determined to stand on my rights as an English-woman: I would go to President Huerta himself, the man who had eaten *ciruelas* with me, and ask if I and my property were safe in Cuernavaca.



CHAPTER VIII

WHEN I reached Mexico City I cast about for the best approach to Huerta, who had once been my friend, but who might now be my enemy. This was not easy, for the murder of Madero had aroused the whole country to tremendous indignation, and all decent people repudiated Huerta. From day to day his reputation grew worse. He drank incessantly. Senators, deputies, anyone in office who dared to say a word against him was doomed to death. All who were not bound to Huerta by fear or by hope of gain avoided him.

One afternoon I went downtown with two or three of my friends to a very fashionable tearoom called "El Globo." There I was taken aback to see President Huerta himself, sitting with a group of gold-braided officers, taking his "tea" — which was, as everyone knew, brandy — in a cup.

He saw me standing in the doorway, and instantly got up and started toward me. In a moment he had given me — so quickly there was no possibility of

warding it off — the famous *abrazo* (embrace) common in Mexico among those who esteem each other highly. It was rather awful for me and quite astonishing to my friends and to the staff officers of the president, who could not understand this demonstration on the part of their chief executive.

If I was startled, however, I was also relieved. This excessively cordial greeting certainly paved the way for my question, and I asked President Huerta whether it would be safe for me to remain in Cuernavaca and look after my financial interests, or whether I had better try to leave. He assured me in a quiet and courteous manner that I could return to Cuernavaca without the least fear; that everywhere in Mexico there would soon be peace and prosperity.

I believed him when he spoke, for he had always a kind of authority that had nothing to do with his position, but was an attribute of the man himself. In spite of his drinking he was looking very well. Power and dignity became him, and he seemed to thrive on the strife that had been his portion since he took office. I felt I had been foolish to think even for a moment that Huerta might misconstrue my personal friendship for Madero and Angeles as meddling in the politics of the country. Whatever else he was, Huerta was not petty.

As we chatted, I had a feeling that I was two-faced to be bantering with the man who had brought horror and misery to my friends and to the whole

nation. And yet, met this way in the tearoom, Huerta simply did not seem to me the bloody president I despised for his treachery, but just the general who had lived in my house.

After I left him, I no longer felt as secure in his assurances of peace and prosperity for Mexico. Away from his dominating presence I realized fully the gravity of the obstacles which confronted him. Even if he were able to control his enemies inside the country, Huerta had made powerful enemies outside; notably, the President of the United States of America, Woodrow Wilson, and President Wilson refused to recognize the administration of a man who had risen to the highest position in Mexico by a crime.

Trusting to Providence rather than to any reassurance I had received in Mexico City, I returned to Cuernavaca. How sad my Bella Vista looked to me with its air of Colonial dignity and its bright, smart furnishings, and no guests to enjoy it but military men on campaign! I wondered how long it would be before it was again full of care-free vacationers.

Off and on I puzzled a good deal over the embrace Huerta had given me. There was no doubt that he had been genuinely glad to see me, and yet his extreme cordiality seemed out of all proportion to the casual friendliness he had shown in Cuernavaca. This was the more strange because, in the interval, he had risen to the highest place in the land. And then I realized quite suddenly that, whether he knew

it or not, — and I think at that time he would have scoffed at the idea, — the man was lonely. He was beginning to experience the isolation of the tyrant, who dares not trust anyone.

We in Cuernavaca found ourselves more and more shut off from the outside world. The telegraph wires were down and the continual destruction of sections of the railroad track interrupted the running of the trains while the track was being mended. Newspapers and magazines seldom reached us. We were astonished to hear that on the twenty-first of April, 1914, a United States warship had entered the port of Vera Cruz. The news of this "intervention by the United States" was given out officially from the governor's palace.

Cuernavaca seethed with excitement. "Intervention by the United States" was a favorite terror held up before the untaught classes by certain elements in Mexico who sought to incite the people to hate the United States. At the same time these elements were working in the United States to arouse animosity against Mexico. Their hope was to precipitate an armed conflict between the two republics which would serve their own selfish purposes. The clamor of these interested groups, added to the evil reputation of President Huerta, had succeeded to the extent of bringing the warship into the port of Vera Cruz. The poorer classes in Mexico, not knowing they were being used as tools, were filled with anger. They were quick to believe that the great republic to the

north was going to swallow them up and take everything they had. Resentment had been smoldering in Cuernavaca against Huerta's government because it had not brought peace. The landing of the United States marines turned the people's wrath away from their own officials, and it flared out full force against the United States. "*Abajo los gringos!*" was the cry — "Down with the *gringos* (Americans)!"

In one part of Cuernavaca there were many beautiful chalets, or bungalows, as the Americans called them, and a large hotel in mission style, all built by an American company. Word came to me that the townspeople had set fire to the hotel, which burned to the ground, and were doing as much damage as they could to the other buildings in this quarter. The rioting spread through the town, and the crowd vented its indignation on everything it could lay hold of which pertained to the United States.

I was sitting on the verandah of the Bella Vista with my daughter when the rabble came storming into the plaza with a big American flag that had been taken from one of the buildings of the colony. They threw the flag to the ground directly in front of my house and trampled on it and insulted it before our eyes. I understood their feeling and knew I should have acted just as they did if I had been as ignorant of the causes behind the happenings. But I was not ignorant. And even though I was not an American, I could not bear to see a nation's standard

so dishonored. I started to run to the rescue of the American flag.

A colonel who had been sitting near us jumped up and put his hand on my arm. "Do not take one step forward, Señora King!" he said with authority. "It is a mob. They might do anything. You and your daughter must go into the house at once!"

But the crowd had already seen my movement and, before we could enter, began to throw stones. The colonel pushed Vera and me behind a pillar and jumped on a chair. From this rostrum he addressed the people, telling them that such violent action against two harmless women would do their cause no good, and also telling them that I was an English-woman, not an American.

They at once ceased their hostilities toward us. "*Viva Mexico!*" they shouted, and before they streamed on they added, with Mexican courtesy, "*Viva la inglesa* (Englishwoman)!"

Although foreigners in many parts of the country suffered because of the landing of the United States marines, it should be said on behalf of the Mexicans that, considering the provocation they were enduring, they treated all foreigners very well at this critical time. If a few foreigners were killed in isolated places, it was usually because they had exasperated the Mexicans by unjust words or foolish actions.

It was soon understood throughout Mexico that the American marines had no intention of taking their

country or anything else that belonged to the Mexicans. Later on, when I went to Vera Cruz, I saw how the marines had worked to make a healthful seaport of the place where before it had been difficult to live because of fevers, mosquitoes, and general unsanitary conditions. I found that the poor among the Mexicans who had actually worked with them had learned to love the American boys, — *muchachos*, as they call them, — and this pleased me. I am always glad to note how much better informed the people of both republics are nowadays about each other, and to see the friendly flow of visitors back and forth; for it seems to me that these intimate contacts between private citizens are the safeguard of both nations against the intrigue of those selfish elements who, even to-day, are desirous of creating friction.

Foreigners in Cuernavaca had no further trouble because of the occupation of Vera Cruz. But we did suffer more and more from the bad ruling of the military governors sent to us, and from the raids of the Zapatistas all about the town. Commander followed commander in rapid succession, but none was able to put down Zapata and his untrained followers. The campaign was pushed with a cruelty as stupid as it was heartless. The cruelties of military officers sent out as representatives of a Revolutionary government which claimed to be of, by, and for the people drove the Indians by thousands to Zapata, and drove the Zapatistas to retaliate with barbarities of their own. The government made every effort to

paint the Zapatistas as monsters and so whip up feeling against them; but even at that time, when we lived in constant danger from them, we realized that these wild men had a spirit our men lacked. For good or evil, they were united by a passionate faith in their leader Zapata, and Zapata followed a vision — land and liberty for his people — and let nothing stand in his way. There was no treachery among the Zapatistas, no money or the love of it, and no self-seeking. Call them fanatics, if you will — but they made our Federals look shabby. There were certainly many men among the Federals who sincerely desired peace and better conditions. But the prominence in Huerta's government of unscrupulous men, with the president heading the list, brought their efforts to nothing. We were all disheartened.

Many a night Vera and I were wakened by the roar of the cannon that had been mounted on a little hill just outside the town. That was the signal to rise and dress quickly. The handful of foreigners who still remained in Cuernavaca prepared to leave, and I began to feel very much alone. Before, when times were bad, we had had Captain Chacón to protect us and jolly us out of our fears. But Chacón and his company were no longer in Cuernavaca; he and his men had been ordered to Tres Marías, high in the mountains.

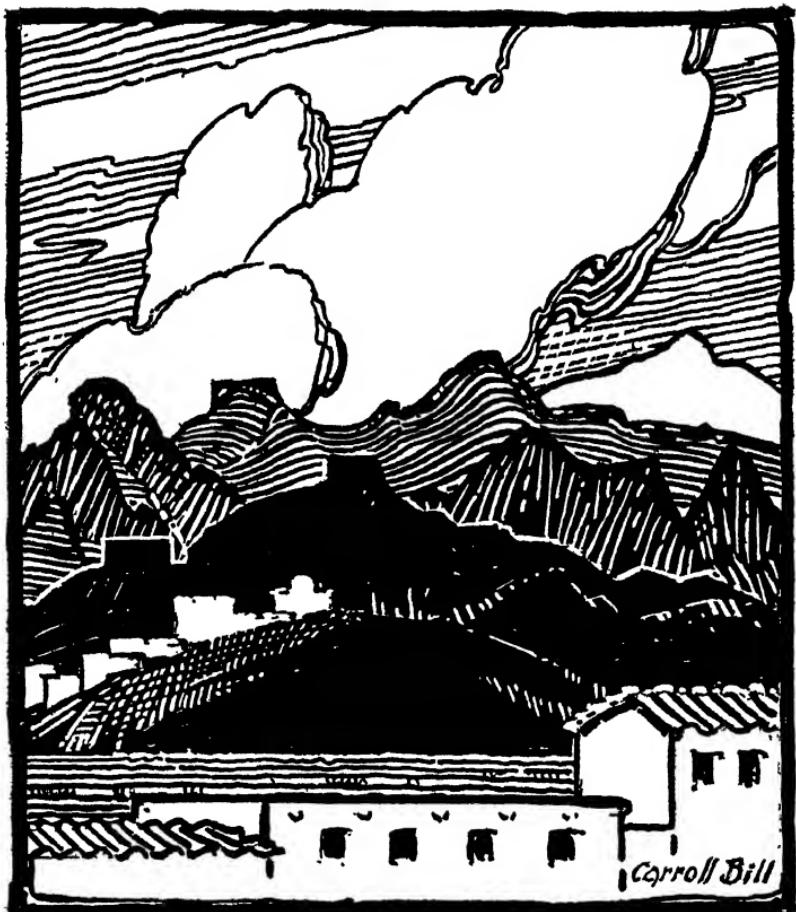
Each of my friends who left urged me to leave too. I should have dearly liked to go, but could not afford to. I felt that my presence gave a kind of protection

to the Bella Vista — a constant reminder that the property was owned by a British citizen. In a way, too, it seemed easier to me to know what was happening than to be worrying blindly.

Strange as it seems now, even at this time I still looked on the Revolution as a temporary interruption of our normal life. I was constantly looking forward to the day when order would be restored and the travelers who had been frightened away from our troubled valley would return to the Bella Vista. One of my principal concerns was lest the spurred boots of the *militares* mar the mosaic floor of my drawing-room! These four years of Revolution had been years of excitement for me, but they had not been good for my business ambitions.

I used to turn over the leaves of the guest book, scarcely used any more, recalling the pleasant people whose names were written there. The book is gone now, destroyed in the fury of the Revolution, but a few of the names come back to me: my first friends, the Harmons of New York; Mr. and Mrs. Ogden Mills, who had not been married very long; the Guggenheims; General Miles; Jenny Lind's son, Major Goldschmidt, and his wife, and the Major's sister, Mrs. Maude, the mother of Cyril Maude the actor; Ravel and Mary Knight Wood, the composers.

I remember particularly the Chinese Minister and his wife, and their two doll-like little girls, whose costumes and tiny bandaged feet were a great wonder to the people of Cuernavaca. Almost all of the



THE VALLEY



Mexican gentlemen who were prominent in the Revolution had stayed at the Bella Vista at one time or another, as well as the distinguished foreigners who visited the country. As I look back, it seems to me that all the important and talented and charming figures of the epoch that was just closing had lingered under my roof.

When I had been poring over the guest-book, I would go off to the privacy of my own sitting room and strum on my piano. While the officers downstairs quarreled over their card game, I would lose myself in dreams.

My illusion was rudely shattered when the military governor presented himself one evening and told my daughter and me to protect ourselves. We had never before feared insult or injury. We had always had, and for that matter were still receiving, kindness and consideration from everyone about us. This was the first hint the authorities had ever given that they themselves doubted their ability to protect us. On the twenty-eighth of April the governor informed us that he could no longer be responsible for our safety, and urged us to leave the town. The few Americans who remained were positively ordered out — not permitted to stay on any pretext. I was now entirely without support and felt I had no choice but to leave.

The news of the official warning to foreigners spread alarm through the whole town. The people of Cuernavaca recognized it as a confession that the

Federals were not so sure of their ability to keep the Zapatistas out of Cuernavaca as they had led us to believe. I was planning to leave my business affairs in the hands of my *cantinero* (barkeeper) and his assistant, who had helped with the management of the hotel since Willie Nevin left me two years before. At the last minute, however, both men became frightened and left. I was obliged to put my affairs in the hands of a young man about whom I knew nothing, while my daughter and I left hurriedly on the military train for Mexico City.

What a trip that was! Vera and I were put in the caboose, along with Mrs. Hall, the American who owned the Morelos Hotel, and some of the townspeople, who were carrying away their belongings as best they could, in baskets and bundles. One poor woman clutched a hen. There we all sat on our valises, for there was nowhere else to sit, a doleful lot, but thankful to have got on the crowded train at all. A host of soldiers was aboard. Quick-firing guns were mounted on the roofs of the cars and near the engines. We had three engines, two in front and one in the middle, for our train was very long and heavy and must pull us to an altitude of 10,000 feet before we could begin to descend into the Valley of Mexico on the other side of the mountain ridge.

Our nerves were strained and tense as the train wound slowly up the steep curves. Just when we were beginning to relax and to feel that we were safe from attack, the shots started. Bang . . . bang

... bullets flew ... down went the soldiers to fight. The little quick-firing guns on top of the cars began to crack away merrily. It was all over in a short time, for our well-armed train and the prompt action of our soldiery were too much for the enemy. The train creaked on again, but always cautiously. Our legs grew stiff from sitting, cramped, on the valises. The trip seemed interminable.

I talked fitfully with Mrs. Hall. She was sunk in despair. "Wiped out," she said, "after the years I worked to build it up! I can't begin again, Mrs. King, at my age. What will become of me?"

I told her there was no use worrying over what had not yet happened. There was certainly a chance that our hotels would weather the storm — if order were restored soon enough.

"Oh, no, Mrs. King," she said. "This is the beginning of the end. You will see."

As if to underscore her words, there was a loud crash. The train stopped with a great jerk, and we were all thrown heavily to the floor. A man near me groaned and cursed under his breath. His leg had been broken. A kind of panic surged through the car. All of us were worn-out with long hours of fear and suspense, and now dazed from the fall. There was a moment when we were on the verge of chaos; then a woman's voice quavered absurdly, "*Oh! Mire lo que la gallina ha puesto!*" (Oh, see what this dear little hen has put!) The hen she was clutching on her lap had laid an egg.



CHAPTER IX

BLESSED hen! Our morale was restored by the time word came to us that this was no terrible trap laid by the enemy, as we had feared. Our train had simply smashed into a train in front of us. There was no danger, just the prospect of more wearisome delay, while in the distance the lights of Mexico City winked tantalizingly through the dusk. Fortunately for Mrs. Hall and Vera and me, the general commanding the train came to us, helped us out of the car, and put us in an automobile he had secured. We shortly arrived in the city, where we had a good bath and a comfortable bed in the home of friends.

All my friends in the capital were very good to me at this time, planning luncheons and dinners and bridges to keep my mind—and theirs—off our troubles. But it was no use. We all had too much at stake financially to take the political situation lightly. Everyone I met seemed, if possible, more pessimistic than before, and lurid bits of political

hearsay were passed about between the endless rubbers of bridge.

Felipe Angeles, I was relieved to hear, had got safely out of the country. I hoped for his wife's sake that he would stay out, but I realized that it was hardly in his character to do so.

"Your friend Huerta," I was told with some asperity, — for everyone had heard about the *abrazo* the president had given me, — "your friend Huerta is going to pieces, and bringing the country to ruin!"

Far from settling down to steady sober leadership, as we had hoped he would once he had attained the presidency, Huerta, it seemed, was dissipating his tremendous energies in vicious living. His governing was erratic, and he himself was moody and given to sudden murderous rages. All over Mexico strong leaders were known to be rising against him, and we foresaw new strife that would further cripple business.

Public sentiment is a strange and primitive thing. Every day the newspapers of the world expose monstrous frauds and great wrongs, and such is the inertia of public sentiment that those who engineered them are scarcely prosecuted. But there are certain taboos whose transgression inflames mankind — and cold-blooded, calculated murder is one of them. Whether from arrogance or carelessness, Huerta had collided with this taboo. If Huerta had seen that Madero was conducted safely out of the country, as he was in honor bound to do, the history of these times might have been entirely different. Madero's popu-

larity was at a low ebb. I know now that when Madero waited in prison, only one military man in Mexico was preparing to lead his troops to the rescue — and that was, of all men, Zapata, whom he had treated badly. But the murder of Madero aroused the whole country. Men who had not seen eye to eye with President Madero when he was alive united to avenge his death. The sincerity and selflessness of Madero, which Zapata respected, suddenly blazed brighter in the eyes of everyone than the blunders Madero had made.

We heard that the men of the north were marching down against Madero's murderer — Carranza, Obregón, Calles, and the terrible Pancho Villa. But, what was more alarming to me, word leaked into Mexico City, in spite of the official censorship, that the Zapatistas were gaining ground in the neighborhood of Cuernavaca.

I waited anxiously for some message about my unlucky hotel, wondering how my affairs were prospering in the hands of the stranger I had left in charge. Finally, at the end of a month, a letter came which confirmed my fears. My affairs were in bad shape. "*Mejor que venga, señora . . .*" I had better come judge for myself.

The danger to Cuernavaca from the Zapatistas was now very great. I found myself between the devil and the deep sea, faced with the choice of losing all I had or of protecting my property at the risk of my life.

In this dilemma, chance offered what looked like a way out for me. An American woman, a Mrs. Mestrezat, who had lived in Mexico many years and did not fear anything, offered to take charge of my interests in Cuernavaca. She was an energetic, capable woman, on whom I knew I could rely. She had been in Cuautla during the fighting there and knew what to expect in Cuernavaca. It was agreed that I should accompany Mrs. Mestrezat to Cuernavaca, remain a day or two to go over the necessary details of my business with her, and then return to the capital.

The only way to reach Cuernavaca was on the military train, and it was necessary to secure special passes to travel on it. I decided to go straight to President Huerta for the passes, as I was anxious to ask his opinion of the safety of the journey; but finding President Huerta proved a real task. He was becoming so capricious in his habits that even his cabinet ministers found it difficult to find him. The people of the city hated and feared the president. They feared not only the guns he commanded, but the man himself, for he had a quality of courage they could not match. My daughter Vera was taking tea downtown one afternoon when half-a-dozen fellows in an ugly mood passed in the street, shouting, "Death to Huerta!" It happened that Huerta was inside at the time. He heard the cry, got up, and walked to the door — alone. "Here is Huerta," he said. "Who wants him?"

Before I could arrange to see the president, a young girl whom I had been meeting in the houses of my friends came to call on me. She was a strikingly beautiful girl, a Rumanian of good family, who had not been long in Mexico City. Her name was Helene Pontipirani. She was having quite a vogue with hostesses, because she was not only young and lovely, but tremendously chic. Everything about her was exquisite, from the set of her head on her slender shoulders to the tiny slippers subtly matched to the tones of her costume. She was the kind of person who always wears her gloves; I cannot imagine her carrying them. Her beauty was the nervous, highly bred type—overbred, perhaps—that calls up a fleeting impression of a high-strung race horse.

She sat down on the sofa and in her pretty English, with just a hint of accent, sketched for me a spirited picture of a strange-looking dog she had met on the way—"such a dog, Mrs. King, so many heredities! And all showing here and there in him." Watching her erect, graceful carriage and the play of her expressive features, I reflected that she herself was very beautifully the product of heredity. Everything about her suggested not merely twenty years, but centuries of sensitive, civilized living.

We chatted of this and that and then, the amenities having been observed, my visitor came straight to the point.

"Mrs. King," she said, with directness, "Mrs. Harrison told me that you are planning to go to see

President Huerta, who is your friend. May I go with you?"

Her request was not wholly unexpected. I hesitated a moment, not quite knowing how to phrase my reply. Then I answered with equal directness.

"I am sorry, but I am afraid I must say no." I knew that she was a correspondent for two or three French newspapers, and I was afraid that if I introduced her to President Huerta she would write something disparaging about him. Goodness knows there was plenty to be said against him, but I did not wish to repay him for any favor he might grant me by presenting someone who would say these unpleasant truths in print. I told her frankly, "If I introduced you to President Huerta he would be nice to you because you are my friend and a charming young girl. But I am very much afraid that you would go off, then, and write something dreadful about him."

"Why, Mrs. King," said the girl, her eyes dancing, "how uncharitable of you to think I will not be able to find even one tiny thing that is nice to say about your friend who is so good to you! Truly, I promise not to say anything bad of him. Think how original it will be to write only good things of M. Huerta!"

"If I could only be sure I could trust you . . ." I said, beginning to waver. I was speaking lightly, but the words come back to me now; for that was the moment when my fate hung in the balance.

The girl leaned forward.

"If you wish, Mrs. King," she said seriously, "I will not write up the interview with President Huerta at all. But I must meet him. You see, I want to ask his permission to — go with you to Cuernavaca!" The long lashes swept up and her dark eyes met mine — audacious, willful eyes, accustomed to getting their way.

"You want to go to Cuernavaca!" I said.

"But yes, of course! There where things are happening. To see for myself the fear and the fighting and these terrible Zapatistas!"

I was so astounded that I could not say a word. Helene Pontipirani laughed gayly at my discomfiture.

"Because I am so — what do you call it? — lady-like, you are surprised. Never fear! I am not one to faint at the smell of blood. Have you not heard that before I came here to Mexico City I was in the north, where Pancho Villa and his men are laying waste the country?"

I had heard that story about her. Until this moment it had seemed incredible.

"To be in Cuernavaca, now, with the Zapatistas closing in. Oh, Mrs. King, what a thrill, what a story!"

"But the danger . . ." I said.

She laughed again. She said, "Danger would never stop me — or you, Mrs. King," and there was enough truth in that to silence me.

All her will and vitality seemed to be beating against me; stirring me in spite of my better judgment. Suddenly she clasped my hands. "Dear Mrs. King!" she said exultantly. "You are going to take me."

The next afternoon we set out to find President Huerta. My daughter Vera insisted on coming along. Luck was with us, and we glimpsed the president and some of his cabinet ministers driving through the lovely park or wood of Chapultepec which surrounds the presidential residence. Our chauffeur followed quickly along the winding avenues shaded with trees so old that Montezuma knew them, past the sentries and up the steep hill where the castle stands. We caught up with Huerta's car just as it stopped, and the president saw us as he alighted.

"Why, it is the Señora King," he said, coming over to us, pleasure in his face. "And the little fair one" — he always called Vera that, *la guerrita* — "and such a beautiful stranger. Come in, Señora King. Let us have a *copita* and speak of old times."

He waved away his cabinet ministers, who were none too pleased at the interruption and at his cavalier dismissal, and led us into the castle.

I have thought back so often to that afternoon that what followed seems to me like a scene from a play. I can see the gilt and brocade of the small formal reception room, and the view through the long window across the soft, grayed tops of the ancient trees in the park to the roofs of the city beyond; the

thimble-like glasses of cognac; the loveliness of the two young girls — my daughter, blonde and ingenuous, and Helene Pontipirani, a little older, dark and fascinating; and the president himself, an erect and soldierly figure moving about, playing the attentive host.

There was no doubt that he was pleased to have us there. He had laid aside his usual austerity of manner and was making himself agreeable and amusing, as he could when he wanted to. It was he who carried the conversation that afternoon, talking easily and well. I have forgotten now what he said, but I remember it struck me that he avoided the subject nearest to the thoughts of all of us — the Revolution. He was talking of inconsequential things, the conventional sort of drawing-room conversation one might have expected to hear in such a room, with its elegance and air of tradition harking back to the stateliness of Emperor Maximilian's court. I remember Helene Pontipirani, looking very lovely and patrician, listening with rapt attention to everything he said. She was all in gray that day, from head to foot; an absurd, smart little hat showed off her curling, lustrous black hair and fine-drawn profile. From time to time she interjected the right word, the right question, to draw him out.

As I look back, I can see that she was like a leading lady giving the star his cues. For Huerta was acting, in a way. Even at the time I realized that. He was deliberately creating an illusion of other times

in that little room, making it an island of tranquillity and form, completely apart from the chaos of Revolution outside. I thought it nice of Helene Pontipirani to fall in with his mood. It was not often, I guessed, that he had the company of ladies, and our friendship satisfied some hungry pride in him; for, like all Mexicans, he had great natural dignity.

His appearance had subtly altered since I had seen him last. I do not know whether or not he had begun to take dope at that time, but the afternoon sunlight falling on his face showed new lines, and the mark of the dissipation and vices that eventually destroyed his health. He was a strong, forceful character, and I realized that his situation must be very trying if he were driven to such respite. It would be romantic to say that all this was the effect of remorse gnawing at his conscience, but I do not think that was so. I doubt if he had the kind of conscience that gnaws, or much moral sense of any kind. And that, I suppose, was his weakness as a leader. He was as able, as gifted, as any; but free men will not follow a man who has revealed himself as without integrity.

Personally, I doubt whether Huerta ever regretted the bloody manner in which he had paid his score against President Madero, or was ashamed of his treachery. I doubt if he wholly understood the moral indignation his act had roused in other people. I think it was a wonder to him that his countrymen turned against him so completely and that foreign

nations refused to recognize his government. But he did see that everything was against him. I think myself that was what got even his iron nerve in the end — his aloneness, the knowledge that every man's hand was against him. Huerta was a man who, as a soldier, had enjoyed the respect of everyone; he was used to having behind him the unswerving loyalty troops give a fine commander. As president, he found himself alone, amid pitfalls. None knew better than he how a man can smile and smile and be a villain, for he was one. I think he accepted treachery as part of the game he was playing, and expected it from those about him. If he despised them, it was for cowards, because they were afraid to stand up to him. And yet, I can see how the petty vigilance must have worn on him. I think that was why he was so glad to see me and the two girls that afternoon. We were women, foreigners, outside it all. With us he could relax. He trusted us.

We were at ease together from the first — enjoying ourselves.

"Ah, those *ciruelas*, the plums of Cuernavaca," Huerta said; "they do not taste the same after they have been shipped to the city, Señora King. How we used to enjoy them! And would you believe it, Señorita Pontipirani," he turned to the Rumanian girl, "would you believe it, *la guerrita* here" — meaning Vera — "used to stand and count the pits on my plate with her eyes growing rounder every minute."

"Oh, I did n't!" protested Vera in such a shocked tone that the rest of us laughed. Vera blushed deeply. She was all schoolgirl that afternoon, speaking when she was spoken to and listening with wide-eyed delight.

A kind of warmth came into the room with her confusion, something innocent and generous.

"Ah, that fabulous Cuernavaca, where such funny things happen!" said Helene Pontipirani mischievously. "Where thorns come miraculously under the saddles of people who do not know how to take a hint, no?" She glanced impishly at the president under her long lashes.

He liked her audacity. She spoke to him as if he were a young man, a handsome young officer. He settled back in his chair and smiled at her. "Very strange things happen, *señorita*," he said solemnly.

"I find," said Helene Pontipirani, a deep note in her voice, "I find that when things happen, it is generally because someone has made them to happen!" She was very erect, now; there was color in her cheeks and her eyes fairly darted sparks. "That is what I like in people," she said, "the power, the force, that makes things to happen!"

Their eyes met and held. I know she fascinated him. Looking back, I can see that though he was definitely old, and besmirched, at that moment he must have fascinated her, too.

"So you want to go to Cuernavaca with the *Señora King*," he said judicially. "Into the midst

of things." He twirled his glass and looked down his nose at her.

"Yes," said Helene Pontipirani, smiling deeply. Everything about her said, "You are n't fooling me with your stern look. I know you like me. We are wild ones, you and I! Not afraid of things like bullets."

"Well, well," said Huerta. "What do you think of such a foolish girl, Señora King? If she must go, I suppose she must go." His wicked old eyes twinkled. "I shall put a double guard on the train, Señora King, to see that no harm comes to you and your charming companion."

Something of the excitement had communicated itself to Vera.

"And I shall go, too?" she asked eagerly.

Huerta looked suddenly grave. "No," he said with decision, "you must not go." And as her face fell he added, with surprising gentleness, "Cuernavaca just now is no place for *la guerrita*. Even your mother and this so-brave young lady must not linger, but must come straight back. Do not worry about your hotel, Señora King. I shall put down these Zapatistas. Only, for the present, I like better to have my friends outside the range of their bullets."

We rose to go. Huerta was reluctant to see us leave and escorted us to the door. As I shook hands with him he said earnestly, "Remember, Señora King. You are not to worry, but — come straight back."

I was touched by his genuine concern. Just then, I think he would have done anything for us.

He turned to Helene Pontipirani, standing beside me, radiant with triumph and more beautiful than ever. And as he bent low over her hand I little realized what I had done to him and to myself in introducing her.



CHAPTER X

Two days later we left for Cuernavaca, Helene Pontipirani and I, and Mrs. Mestrezat, the American woman who had agreed to take over the management of my property in Cuernavaca. Until twelve o'clock the night before we left, Vera begged and implored me, in spite of Huerta's injunction, to take her along. I still shiver when I think how close I came to giving in to her.

The military train that was to carry us back into the danger zone was almost empty, unlike the crowded train that had brought us away. I was relieved, however, to see boarding the train a man named German Cañas, whom I had known slightly in Cuernavaca. He was a substantial man of the town who had brought his wife and little daughter to Mexico City and was now making a flying trip to Cuernavaca, as I was, to look out for his business interests there. His presence reassured me. I felt that here was someone on the train to whom I could appeal in an emergency.

Mrs. Mestrezat had quite made up her mind to remain in Cuernavaca, in spite of the danger, and was bringing her son and daughter to live with her at the Bella Vista. I scarcely remember the boy, for I saw him only that one day; but he was about twenty years of age. The daughter, Catherine, was a self-possessed little girl of nine, who looked us all over with a level gray gaze and turned her back on us. She spent the whole trip looking intently out the window — looking for Zapatistas, she told us later.

I was trying to marshal my thoughts and give Mrs. Mestrezat as much information as possible about my affairs in Cuernavaca before we arrived. She helped me out with calm, sensible questions, and again I thanked my stars that fate had sent such a woman to my door.

"Do you think we 'll have trouble with that foreign girl getting hysterics?" she said suddenly, in a low tone. "For all she was so anxious to come, she 's looking pretty washed-out."

I glanced at Helene Pontipirani in surprise. She had pulled off her hat, and was leaning her head against the back of the seat. She was pale and her eyes were closed. Her utter passivity was unlike her and disturbed me. As if she felt us looking at her, she opened her eyes and smiled.

"It is nothing," she said. "I am just a little tired. I did not sleep well last night. Perhaps you would sing to me a song, Mrs. King. Something low and sweet."

I sang her an old French lullaby, wondering a little what might be passing through the thoughts of this strange girl who sat so quietly, looking past us. The song seemed to please her, and I sang her another, "Mighty Lak a Rose," which was very new then.

"There," she said; "I feel better now. Thank you, Mrs. King."

To our relief, the train got through the mountains without being attacked and we piled gratefully into a station cab. The town looked forlorn as we drove in — all the large houses closed up and few people in the streets. There was an air of apathy about the place, even about the officers who were sitting in the *portal* of the Bella Vista when we arrived. I could not help laughing at their stupefaction and delight, however, when they caught sight of Helene Ponti-pirani. It was a long time since they had seen a girl like that.

The girl herself ignored them. Only her heightened color and a subtle accentuation of her grace revealed that she was aware of the frank Latin stares. She went upstairs to her room immediately, carrying the small bag she had brought. I recall now that she would let no one else touch it. Mrs. Mestrezat and I had a light meal and plunged at once into business matters. On taking an inventory, we found that the pantry was almost empty. This was serious, since there was a possibility of the enemy cutting off food supplies from the town. We went at once to the commander, General Romero, to secure a pass for

Mrs. Mestrezat's son to go to Mexico City, purchase provisions there, and bring them back to Cuernavaca. No one was allowed to leave the town without a pass from the commander. General Romero told us that the military train was returning to Mexico at once, that evening, and the Mestrezat boy left with it. I never saw him again.

Mrs. Mestrezat and I pored over the tangled accounts in the ledger. About nine o'clock I happened to glance out of the window and was astonished to see Helene Pontipirani outside, in the company of several young officers. She was looking very smart and lovely in a riding habit and was tightening up the stirrups of a beautiful saddle horse. All of her weariness seemed to have left her; there were life and grace in her every movement. As I watched, she rode away with the officers. It was almost eleven when I emerged from my conference with Mrs. Mestrezat, but I was told that Miss Pontipirani and her companions had not yet returned. This bothered me, for she was a young girl and a stranger, and evidently not so sophisticated as I had imagined, since she did not seem to understand the customs of the country.

When I came down the next morning I saw horses waiting and the two young officers who had been with her the night before standing in the doorway talking to some of their fellow officers. I guessed that another jaunt was planned, and I went hastily upstairs again to Helene Pontipirani's room. The girl was standing before the mirror pulling little curling

tendrils of hair out under the stiff brim of her riding hat. I explained to her that in Mexico a young lady could not indulge in unchaperoned rides with the *militares* without injury to her reputation. I did not want the officers to think lightly of her because she was a stranger and unacquainted with their conventions.

I was afraid she would be offended. But my remarks seemed rather to amuse her.

She laughed and tilted her hat to a more rakish angle.

"I know what I am doing," she said confidently, and it was suddenly apparent to me that she did. Her tone implied, "Dear Mrs. King, how can you be so *naïve*?"

I felt like a fool. I said, "Very well. Then I shall have nothing more to do with you." Looking back, I suppose that was just what she wanted. . . . I was very angry when I left her. "A newspaper story!" I thought. "She has come down here for a spree!" It was not the first case of war-time hysteria I had seen, but I was furious that I had been made a party to Helene Pontipirani's indiscretions.

She must have anticipated my sudden coolness, for it did not perturb her. A few minutes later I saw her descending the great stone staircase to the knot of officers waiting below. She descended lightly and with an air, swinging her crop a little, and the ardent eyes of all the men were centred on her. It was for

all the world like the entrance of the prima donna in a comic opera.

We had expected to return to Mexico City that day on the military train, but the time of its departure had been changed and it was impossible to leave. I kept away from Miss Pontipirani, which was not at all difficult, as she continued to move about attended by the male chorus. She spent that entire night up in the mountains at the soldiers' camp at El Parque, about three hours' ride from Cuernavaca. The next afternoon I saw her hanging on the arm of the commanding general. She looked very fascinating and must have been so, for she had secured a permit to leave on the military train the following day.

I should have liked to return on this train, too, but such a course was out of the question for me. Mrs. Mestrezat's son had not yet returned from Mexico City with the provisions for his mother and sister, and this worried me. I felt responsible for the Mestrezats, and I did not want to leave until I saw the boy arrive and knew that Mrs. Mestrezat and little Catherine were taken care of. Mrs. Mestrezat had been most forbearing through all my chagrin at having brought to Cuernavaca a girl who behaved as Helene Pontipirani was behaving. She never said a word to me about the matter, though her eyebrows spoke volumes.

I was awakened at daybreak by a knock on my door. I opened it and found Helene Pontipirani

standing outside, fully dressed, with a pistol in her hand.

"So you are not coming to Mexico this morning!" she said.

"Of course not. How can I?" I retorted, irritated at having been wakened for such a silly question.

She studied me with her unquiet eyes.

"Well, then, I shall leave you my pistol," she said with decision.

I would not take the pistol she tried to force on me. "I don't want your pistol," I said. "What I would like is an explanation of your strange conduct. Don't you think you have treated me pretty shabbily considering that I took you to President Huerta and made it possible for you to come to Cuernavaca? What does all this mean?"

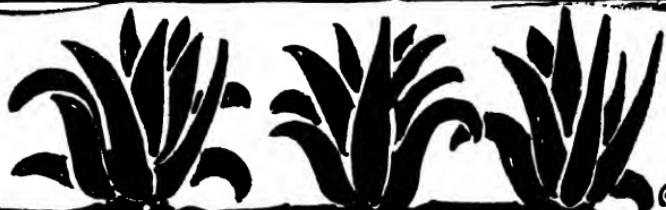
Her head went up at my tone. She hesitated, and I thought for a moment she was going to speak; but she thought better of it and, with an impatient shrug, threw down the pistol on the table and left me. Shortly after I heard her galloping off to the station.

"My boy will surely arrive to-night with the supplies," said Mrs. Mestrezat later. "Why don't you plan to return to Mexico to-morrow, Mrs. King? I know your daughter will be wondering what is keeping you."

It happened that the commanding general came down the street while I was sitting in the *portal*. He was followed by several soldiers guarding a prisoner.



PULQUERIA



CBM

"Oh, good day, General Romero," I said. "You are just the person I want to see. I shall probably be free to go back to Mexico to-morrow. Could you give me a pass on the military train?"

I can still remember his face as he stood looking down at me. He looked very, very tired as he said quietly. "Not to-morrow, *señora*."

"The next day?" I asked.

"Nor the next day," he said, in a flat courteous tone.

"What is wrong?" I asked, in sudden alarm. "What is the matter?"

"The railroad track has been blown up, beyond El Parque, *señora*. The morning train, with your friend on it, passed through safely. Immediately afterward came the explosion."

"Thank goodness the train got through," I said. "The track will be mended soon, of course?" I was surprised at the sharp note of anxiety in my voice. After all, sections of the railroad track had been blown up before. But something in the general's manner disquieted me.

"No, this time it will not be mended soon. The destruction is on the mountain side, and they made a thorough job of it. Never before was the enemy so well informed, *señora*, of the moment when to strike." He spoke with an odd sort of emphasis, as though he meant to convey more than he said. He said, "It is possible, *señora*, that we will not be able to repair the tracks this time."

"Why, with such a general as you, and our brave

troops—" My attempt at lightness died away.
"But then, we are — "

"Cut off, *señora* — completely cut off. No one can leave Cuernavaca. No food, no reënforcements can reach us here."

I stared at him with my blood running cold. He seemed to find a kind of satisfaction in my silent horror.

"Ah, Señora King," he said, "did you not know that the girl you brought among us was a spy sent by the terrible Pancho Villa? It was she who passed the information to the enemy."



CHAPTER XI

THROUGH the pounding of the blood in my ears I heard the general's voice, it seemed, a long way off. "Some of my officers have asked that I arrest you, Señora King. But I told them I have known you a long time and that I am sure you would not knowingly have brought a spy to Cuernavaca. Besides, you are caught with the rest of us. . . ."

I tried incoherently to tell him how I felt. I have no idea what I said, but it must have been clear to him that I was terribly shaken both by the revelation of Helene Pontipirani's perfidy and ingratitude and by the part I had unwittingly played in helping her betray the people who had befriended me — the general and his officers, President Huerta, and the innocent people of the town.

General Romero was saying, "We captured this unfortunate fellow," meaning the prisoner, "with a note for the enemy in his possession, which she had given him in the market place. Apparently there were other notes that we did not intercept. . . .

Orders are to shoot him in front of your house."

I was only half listening. My mind was in a whirl. "Oh, how can I have been so taken in!" I cried. And yet, remembering the girl, her exquisite smartness and fastidiousness, I could hardly believe she was a common adventuress, a spy. "Who would ever have suspected her?"

The general shrugged. I noticed again how weary he looked. I had a curious impression that he was not too surprised that the fascinating Helene Ponti-pirani had turned out to be a spy — as if this were of a piece with everything else that was happening. After the general left me and I had recovered somewhat from the shock his news had given me, that was the impression that remained: the fatalism of our commanding general in this crisis. And it was this which really frightened me.

My sanguine Anglo-Saxon temperament demanded action. Everyone realized that the Zapatistas, having cut us off from Mexico City, would waste no time in pressing their advantage. My immediate thought was to get word to my daughter Vera that I was, so far, safe. How thankful I felt that I had held out against her wish to come with me to Cuernavaca! I was not only anxious to spare her worry. It was important that she explain my plight to the British Minister, Sir Thomas Hohler, who was our friend, and enlist his aid in urging the government to send help quickly to Cuernavaca. Whenever I thought of President Huerta and the trouble I had unwittingly

made for him, I suffered an actual physical pang of remorse and humiliation. I was sure, however, that he must be doing everything in his power to rush reënforcements to Cuernavaca. He was too seasoned a campaigner to leave his troops in a trap. He knew, what Helene Pontipirani had found out, that our general was short both of food and of men. It was all a question of time — the speed with which help could come.

I finally succeeded in finding a man who was willing to try to slip through the circle of Zapatistas and carry my letter to Mexico. The bargain was that my daughter would give him seventy-five pesos if and when he managed to deliver the letter, and that I would pay him seventy-five more when he brought me back the answer.

The letter dispatched, I felt much better. "There, Mrs. Mestrezat," I said. "We have done all we can, and it is up to Mexico City to do the rest."

"Well, I just hope they hurry," said Mrs. Mestrezat. "My boy will never get through with the food, now, and even if the Zapatistas don't get into the town, in a day or two we are going to be hungry."

The unfortunate man who carried the note for Miss Pontipirani was shot at dawn the following morning, in front of my house as the general had warned us. Mrs. Mestrezat and I took good care not to be up to witness the execution, but the thought of the poor fellow's fate distressed us for days. It brought home to us the risk that Helene Pontipirani

herself had taken in meddling in the affairs of these grim and determined men; and to add to our unhappiness we heard whispers among the servants that the dead body of a foreign girl had been seen — some said, in the depths of a *barranca*; others, lying at the foot of a *ceiba* tree. I wondered what strange quirk in that incomprehensible girl had made her forsake the sheltered, fastidious life she could have led to risk death in the cause of illiterate, half-clothed Indians.

“But what of us?” said Mrs. Mestrezat.

We were contemplating the meagre breakfast which was all we dared permit ourselves. The contrary sort of hunger that comes over one at the mere suggestion that there is not enough to eat tormented us. We tried to make the rolls last as long as possible, and were just finishing the last crumb when two urchins were ushered into the dining room, the older bearing a note which he had refused to give anyone but me. I took the scrap of paper, torn from a notebook, on which had been hastily penciled: —

Don’t worry, Mother. I’m here. See you soon.

CHACÓN

“Chacón!” I said, astounded. I knew very well that Chacón was stationed now at Tres Marias up in the mountains, fifteen kilometres from Cuernavaca on the way to Mexico City. This town had been cut off from us by the destruction of the railroad.

“Sí, Sí! *El capitán!*” chorused the little boys with a flash of white teeth. They were fairly dancing up

and down with excitement. Both at once, they began to tell me how Captain Chacón had arrived in Cuernavaca that morning after having come alone and on foot across the mountains from Tres Marias. He had walked all night, and under cover of darkness had slipped through the ring the enemy had drawn about us. "*Solito, señora, solito!* With a great sack over his shoulder."

We had scarcely digested the wonder of this when Federico himself appeared, nonchalant as ever and looking vastly pleased with himself. No one, to see him, would ever have guessed that he had just come fifteen kilometres over a mountain trail, hampered by darkness and heavily laden, in danger every moment of losing his footing or of running into outposts of the Zapatistas. He had washed and shaved and had even, I think, managed a nap while his uniform was being brushed. A *mozo* followed at his heels, bearing the famous sack. When we had embraced and exchanged delighted greetings, Federico turned to the *mozo* with a commanding gesture.

"Open, Juanito!"

The *mozo* tipped up the sack. Out plopped a smaller sack of flour, followed by a perfect avalanche of tins of canned meats and vegetables that rattled over the floor — the supplies we had ordered through Mrs. Mestrezat's son. We laughed till we were almost hysterical. I have never since seen a picture of the Goddess of Plenty and her cornucopia without a flash-back to that Indian boy shaking out the sack.

We put Chacón in the most comfortable chair out in the *portal*, with a bottle of my very best cognac before him, and demanded an account of his exploit. He was constantly interrupted by his fellow officers, who came rushing up to embrace him. His best friends abused him roundly and cheerfully assured him that no one but he would have been such a fool as to come charging through the enemy's country in uniform. "What a man!" said everyone.

Federico enjoyed himself hugely.

"Would you believe it, Mother, they told me at Tres Marías I could n't make it! I bet Enrique a pint of cognac against his horse that I 'd get through, and here I am — but the horse is still at Tres Marías." He roared with laughter.

"You should have been there, Mother. You should have seen the look on that little *gringo*" — Mrs. Mestrezat's son — "when he found out that the railroad track was blown up and the train was not going any farther than Tres Marías. He fiddled around a-while and then he said to me," — Chacón made his voice high and effeminate, — "'Well, I guess I shall have to take the things back to Mexico.' I said to him, 'What! You son of who knows whom, do you really mean to say that you 're not going on to Cuernavaca with that food when you know your mother and the Señora King will starve without it? You so-and-so and so-and-so, you call yourself a man and you have not the guts to walk over a couple of mountains to save your mother and sister?'"

This was not wholly just to the Mestrezat boy; he was after all a foreigner and a stranger who did not know that rough, mountainous country. But Chacón swept on indignantly, "The little whipper-snapper said, 'I cannot take so difficult and dangerous a journey on foot and heavily laden.' . . . I said, 'Then, I will go to them!'"

He tossed off his glass of cognac and sniffed appreciatively. "Ah, but the company gave me a send-off, Mother! . . . You know, I think they thought they were rid of me for keeps and were beginning to remember my good points."

As he started down the mountain side to come to us his brother officers had stood behind him holding their swords at the point, the handles aloft, each sword a cross,—the Crusaders' benediction,—and prayed for him, that he might reach us safely! I do not think there was one among them who would have taken such a desperate risk to save the lives of two women and a little child.

Chacón's presence put new heart in me. His gallantry wiped out the dark taste that Helene Ponti-pirani's betrayal had left in my mouth. Then, too, he was full of optimistic assurances, and I was only too glad to believe them all. Already Huerta had ordered troops to relieve us; it was only a question of how long it would take them to make their way over the mountains. I can see now that Chacón himself did not believe all he said. It was not so much our immediate lack of food that had brought him to us

as his realization of the more terrible dangers that lay ahead.

He had come just in time. It was Sunday morning when the railroad was blown up, and Sunday night when Chacón crossed the mountains. He had reached us on Monday morning. Early Tuesday morning the Zapatistas began the concerted drive we were expecting.

Mrs. Mestrezat and I were awakened by the loud roar of cannon. Listening closely, we could tell that both the cannon inside the town and those placed outside at La Herradura, the horseshoe-shaped hill where I had always picnicked, were in action. The light crack of rifle fire was all about us. The Zapatistas were attacking Cuernavaca from all sides at once—a fierce attack, without quarter.

This was real warfare and we were in the midst of it. Before, we had been on the outskirts. For four days and nights the fighting never ceased. At night Cuernavaca was an inferno. The Zapatistas had bombarded and destroyed the electric light plant outside the town, the officer stationed there to protect it having been too frightened to resist; and complete darkness was added to the other horrors. Hundreds of poor people had taken refuge in the Spanish Monastery, and we would have gone there too, but the bishop sadly informed us that it was already overcrowded and there was no more room. The Zapatistas were winning on all sides. By Friday the government troops were very tired. Until then we had been

comparatively safe, because the Bella Vista was located in the centre of the town. But now flying bullets were falling in many parts of the hotel and we dared not cross the courtyard for fear of them.

As far as possible, Mrs. Mestrezat and I clung to routine habits, and that Friday night, although we hardly felt like sleeping, we forced ourselves to go to bed at the usual time. I dozed off into a light sleep, from which I was aroused by a knock at my door. I opened quickly, fearing greater trouble than we had yet had, and found the commanding general standing outside.

“You had better get up, *señora*, and secure mules and horses,” he said. “I am evacuating the town to-night with all my troops, and you will be safest if you come with us.”

“To-night!” I echoed, stunned, and hardly believing him, so sudden was the news. “But it is impossible! How can I secure animals at a moment’s notice? Why, this is preposterous, general; you can’t mean what you are saying!”

“We are leaving to-night,” he said calmly, ignoring my outburst, “and I shall feel very pained if the Señora King, her companion, and the little girl do not accompany us.”

Incredible as it seemed, he meant what he was saying. Although, as I know now, he had received specific orders from President Huerta not to leave, he meant to evacuate and take from Cuernavaca its last protection. Indignation surged over me.

"You, a soldier!" I said. "You would run and leave the men, women, and children of this town to the mercy of an enemy already drunk with victory! Oh, how can you be such a coward!"

I think he could have slapped me. He said stiffly, "You must do what you think best," and turned on his heel. If a look of scorn could prove fatal, he would have dropped in his tracks.

A little later, however, he came back to tell Mrs. Mestrezat and me to be ready to start at six in the morning. He was concerned for our safety because we were foreigners, and he knew he would be called to account for us.

I was trembling with nervousness and anger. There was no room in me for fright. Evacuation under the circumstances was a monstrous thing. No one was prepared. How could we all — or indeed any of us — secure saddle horses and mules at this late hour? We could not. And how could we follow the troops on foot! We were deserted, left to our fates. Why pretend otherwise?

In a mood of defiant contempt, I went back to bed.

Outside in the corridor and on the stone staircase I heard the quick tramp of the officers' boots coming and going, and low curt questions and answers.

"They are getting ready to leave," I thought.

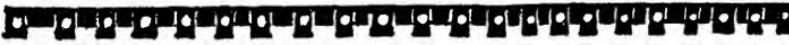
Suddenly there was the sound of half-a-dozen pairs of boots all together on the staircase, the clink of spurs, and voices raised above the normal pitch — angry, authoritative voices, clashing like swords.

"They are going," I thought in a panic. I rushed to the door just as I was, barefoot, in my nightgown. There on the staircase backed against the rail stood General Romero, and facing him were the officers of his staff.

"You are going!" I cried.

A colonel, Montes de Oca, looked up. "Calm yourself, *señora*," he said. "No one is leaving Cuernavaca. We are not going, nor the troops, and our general is not going either. We will not permit him to go!" And I understood that they meant to shoot him if he tried.

"Go back to bed, *señora*," said Montes de Oca. "So long as we live, we will protect Cuernavaca!"



CHAPTER XII

THE courageous, decisive stand of the staff officers was like a rallying cry. Our weary, disheartened troops responded to this new leadership with a great burst of effort. By the sixth day it was evident that our men were not only holding their own, but were actually beginning to press back the Zapatistas! We knew this could not last; our men were exhausted, fighting on nerve. But if only they could hold out a little longer! On the seventh day the long-looked-for relief arrived.

What a sight it was to see Colonel Hernandez and two thousand Federal troops come tramping into town! They were weary and battered enough, but fresh and strong-looking beside our poor garrison; and the sight of them filled us with joyous confidence. They had come on foot from Tres Marias, high in the mountains, which was as far as the trains could go. The Zapatistas had made them fight every inch of the way, and it had taken them a day and a night to cover distance which in peace time is a three-hour

walk. They were ravenously hungry, as it had been impossible to stop on the way for food; but the women of Cuernavaca were only too glad to scurry about and prepare hot food — such as still remained — for our deliverers, happy that our own brave garrison could seize a breathing spell.

The fighting continued after the reënforcements arrived, but with less violence. It dwindled until, about the twelfth day, we began to feel comparatively safe. The shops, closed since the first day of attack, opened again and business was resumed. How good it looked to see the main street alive with people and the merchants' stocks spread out! In Mexico, when shops are closed, blinds are drawn down over the show windows, and the effect of a business street with everything shuttered is indescribably bleak and dead.

The military band played spirited marches in the plaza in front of my house. On Sunday morning the girls paraded around and around the plaza in their finery, and the men watched them as if nothing else were on their mind. The hospitals were filled with wounded and the number killed in the fighting was not known, nor did we wish to know it. We were gay in Cuernavaca because the enemy had been driven from our doorstep and a thin line was opened up to the railroad. That was all we had gained, really. We deluded ourselves with the thought that our men had decisively driven back the enemy, but I can see now that that was not so. The Zapatistas had simply

retired in the face of our suddenly increased strength; and though they had withdrawn, they kept their ring about us like wolves waiting for their prey to weaken.

Our commanding general who had wished to evacuate the town was ordered back to Mexico City with his staff, much to his delight, and a new general was sent to replace him. Colonel Hernandez, who had led the troops to our relief, was promoted and sent back to Tres Marias with a thousand men to repair the railroad track. With Hernandez and his strong detachment at work on the railroad and a new commander in Cuernavaca, — General Pedro Ojeda, who had a long and distinguished record behind him, — I began to think my troubles were over, and that it would not be long before I should be back in Mexico City again with Vera. I think my confidence was pretty generally shared in Cuernavaca, except by the few who best understood our situation.

Mrs. Mestrezat and I treated ourselves to a full meal again. We had been able to buy some additional supplies after General Ojeda arrived, and with these added to the provisions Chacón had brought we felt well provided for. The officers too were living well; and at this time the camp followers had no difficulty in securing food for the soldiers. In those days the Mexican army had no regular commissary department and the soldiers brought their "women" with them to cook and care for them — women worn gaunt with hardship who could fight like she-devils if need be, and who were yet wonderfully gentle and compassion-

ate to their men. While the men were fighting their way ahead, these women would slip through the lines and go on to the place where the army was to stop, and it was seldom that the soldiers failed to find something savory stewing or broiling over the charcoal when they arrived. On long marches the women carried the soldiers' money in order to buy the food; but the food was not always bought and paid for.

I remember an officer telling me with great gusto how on one occasion, when our army was coming through the little village of Chapultepec, not far from Cuernavaca, the *soldaderas* "caught" their dinner, as they say. The improvised commissary squad of female foragers had arrived, as usual, ahead of the tired, hungry troops, and had spied at once flocks of fine fat turkeys, hens, and chickens. They had money, for the Federals were still being paid, and they offered to buy what they needed of this tempting poultry display. But the owners of the poultry were Zapatistas. They refused to sell to the Federals' women at any price. "*Que bueno!*!" (How nice), said the *soldaderas*. "Then we shall take them! We must have food." And with that, they chased the fowls and took the plumpest, while the owners stood by not daring to oppose them. Everybody knew the *soldaderas*!

As time passed, and just when all seemed to be going well, the Zapatista ring closed tighter. The Zapatistas seized El Parque and the village of Cuajumulco, which we had thought well guarded, and so

closed the road which our generals had opened up between Cuernavaca and the end of the railroad at Tres Marias. The Zapatistas were never again dislodged from this strategic position. Once more we were cut off from Mexico City, our source of supplies, and from this June day until mid-August suffered, as the Zapatistas wished, from starvation.

There is such a horror over my whole memory of this period that it is hard to remember that our desperate plight became apparent to me only gradually. I simply could not understand what lay ahead. If anyone had told me, I would have said, Such things do not happen; or at least, Such things do not happen to me. I was living from day to day, a tedious rather than a frightened life. I played my piano; there were games of bridge — very bad games, as all the good players had long since left; conversations with Mrs. Mestrezat; and, in between, the nonsense of Chacón and his friends. They had great sport with little nine-year-old Catherine. She would follow with wide, solemn eyes and bated breath their yarns of impossible adventures, until suddenly she would catch on that she was being taken in. "I know! You're fooling." And she would add, with great dignity, "I knew it all the time!" "A real American *keed*," Lieutenant Colonel Zaldo used to say, delightedly.

I did not know very much about what was going on in a military way in the outlying country, for my Spanish was still very poor and I could not follow closely what was said. Sometimes as I look back I

am tantalized by the thought that so often I was close to the main pulse and yet could not grasp what was going on, because of my unfortunate handicap. I was like a person hard of hearing who must always strain to understand and then wonder what he has missed. At other times, I think perhaps it was just as well for me that I did not understand any better; if I had understood the Revolution then as I do now I might have been tempted to stick my finger in the pie.

As far as I could tell, there seemed to be a kind of lull; no active attack on the town at least. Only, when General Ojeda sent out a column to bring back the supplies of flour, corn, and lard which we needed and which President Huerta had sent to Tres Marías for us, the Zapatistas attacked the column and seized the food. This happened again and again; and Mrs. Mestrezat and I began to ration out our own provisions. I had never again seen the man who left to take my letter to Vera, and I wondered often whether he had reached Mexico safely or if he had been captured or shot on the way. I know now that he got through safely with the letter and that Vera paid him the seventy-five pesos as agreed, and gave him an answer which he was to bring back to me for seventy-five more. But the messenger evidently felt that with seventy-five pesos — a small fortune to him — in his pocket he would be a great fool to risk his neck returning to Cuernavaca. While he was enjoying the *cantinas* and pretty girls of the capital, my daughter Vera was busy enlisting the aid of our friends. I

know that Sir Thomas Hohler, the British Minister, and General Blanquet, the Minister of War, and President Huerta himself were moving heaven and earth to get help to Cuernavaca; but the Zapatistas were too strong in our state.

Early in July, General Ojeda sent the last column up to Tres Marias to bring back food. I stood at my window to watch the troops go, praying that they would return safely with the supplies, for the symptoms of slow starvation were beginning to appear in the poorer people of the town.

Only a remnant of the column ever returned to Cuernavaca.

“Sixty mules laden with flour, corn, and lard — carried over to the Zapatistas by our own men!” The bitter word flew round the town. The troops on whom we depended had deserted and joined the enemy. How well I remember the fury of Chacón when he brought the news to Mrs. Mestrezat and me. . . .

“Traitors! Cowards!” we called these men, and many other things beside; but now that it is all over, I am not sure we were just. The times were upside down. At the head of the Revolutionary government which Madero had fought to establish now stood his murderer, President Huerta; and from day to day it grew clearer that he was as black a traitor to the ideals of the Revolution as he had been to its leader. Though he called himself “Revolutionary,” he stood for the privileges of the few as surely as

Dictator Díaz had. Knowledge and understanding of these things were sweeping through the awakened masses; fragmentary knowledge, but enough to give eyes to the blind faith with which the soldiers had formerly followed their immediate *jefe*. Now they looked beyond their general's bravery to the man and the cause he served; and when they found him, shall we say unwittingly, serving the insidious conservative cause, who shall blame them for deserting to the ranks of Zapata, true as steel to the Revolution?

But after this disaster General Ojeda dared not send out any more of his troops, and every day the suffering increased in Cuernavaca. Much to our relief the poorer people began to leave by hundreds, going to the smaller towns which the enemy held, but which they were permitted to enter so long as they were known not to be in sympathy with the Federals. They continually sent word to their friends to join them, saying that they were well treated by the Zapatistas and that there was plenty of food for all. This, we found out later, was not entirely true. Both sides had laid waste the countryside, and there was hunger outside as well as inside of Cuernavaca.

Animals which could not be used for food themselves were left to starve and die. One day a man brought me two bull-terrier pups whose eyes were barely open. He was running for his life from the *hacienda* where he had been living, but had not the heart to leave these pups, whose mother had died from lack of food. He brought them to me on the

chance I might have enough for them to eat. They were little beauties, and when we saw how they won Catherine's heart it was clear that we should have to find something for them to eat. The love of animals was in this child, and she cared for the sleek, whimpering little creatures as seriously as a young mother. Mrs. Mestrezat and I even let her take them to bed with her. We had no such luxuries as milk and bread for the little dogs, so they had to try to eat rice and beans. There was nothing else. This was not puppy food, and for want of nourishment they soon died.

Poor Catherine! What wails and tears, the heart-rending grief of a little child. Nothing would do but the pups must be properly buried. I had my house boy dig a grave and found a nice soft towel to wrap the puppies in, and a little box for a coffin. I thought when the puppies were in the ground and covered with earth, that would end the ceremony. But no. Catherine cut flowers in my patio to cover the grave and burned candles on it. She got my boy to make her a cross and place it at the head of the grave, and there that little one cried and prayed till the candles burned out.

It was not only pups, alas, who died of starvation. What food was available was naturally given first to the fighting men on whom the town depended for its protection. Mules and horses were killed for the troops. Mrs. Mestrezat and I tried to eat the horse and mule meat, but it was disgusting to us as we had nothing to cook it with to make it palatable. We

were helping daily as much as we dared by giving small amounts of beans, rice, and sugar from our own scant stores to starving women and children. The poor folk searched the streets for edible refuse. Bishop Fulcheri killed his prize cow, the pride of his life, for them to eat. But there was not enough for everyone. I inquired twice and was told that twenty-seven had died one day and fifteen the next; after that I took care never to ask again, as I was powerless to give relief.

The wonderful soldiers' women — none like them in the world for patience and bravery at such times — combed the town for food, and when they could not get it any other way they stole, whatever and wherever they could, to nourish their men. These were the type of women who one day, in the north, when their men ran short of ammunition, tied their *rebozos* to the ammunition cart and hauled it to them. I bow in respect to the Mexican woman of this class — the class despised by the women of indolent wealth, ignorantly proud of their uselessness. The Mexican women who marched with the Mexican soldier, who went before him to the camping place to have refreshment ready, who nursed him when sick and comforted him when dying, were helpers and constructionists, doing their part in laying the foundation of this liberal government of to-day. Mexican women of education, just emerging from your shells of blindness, remember this and honor, wherever she may be found, the Mexican soldier's woman!

The time came, however, when even the *soldaderas* could not find food. I was told one day that four soldiers had died of hunger. I asked the provost-marshall if this were true. He said, "Yes, to my sorrow, it is."

Poor fellows! Victims of the cruel *leva*, the enforced military service, caught coming out of their homes or the shops or the bull ring and thrown into the army, there to be left without food or money. Their last pay was long since spent. This was the Federal army! A fierce rebelliousness swept over me for the fate of these poor wretches, and for my own. Without will to harm anyone, we had been swept, helpless and protesting, into this tragic game; used, like pawns, to further the cruel bloodshed — and left to perish in it. While I was outwardly calm the cry was always in my ear, "I am a foreigner! Why should I suffer in this Revolution?"

Mrs. Mestrezat and I could no longer bear to sit out in the *portal* on account of seeing the suffering men, women, and children who passed, many barely able to walk, they were so weak. Their only food at this time was *quelites*, a weed, and *guayabas*, a hard sour fruit used normally only for jellies, and sugar, which they dissolved in water and drank. At last not even *quelites* and *guayabas* could be found, and there was only sugar — the sugar which had made the *hacendados* rich and wiped out the homes of the poor with its planting.

And still help did not come. The people of the



MARCHING WOMEN



town settled into a kind of stoical Indian lethargy; I think most of them realized that help would never come now. Only Mrs. Mestrezat and I, with the Nordic instinct to battle fate, clung desperately to the belief that something must happen to save us.

The rainy season had come, and every night there was a heavy downpour. At first I loved the crash of the tropical torrents and the gurgle and rush of the water along the gutters and spouts; the free gusty sound of the storms eased my spirit. But after a time the monotonous regularity of the rains began to wear on my nerves; the more so because they never seemed to leave any trace. We wakened in the morning to a sun-dried world in which the streets were scarcely damp, so quickly did the water run off in Cuernavaca. I could not sit in my *portal* because of the misery in the street; I would not sit in my patio. The four walls oppressed me and the prettiness of the garden seemed a mockery. I took to sitting in the upper rooms of the hotel, where I could look beyond the town and the *barranca* to the sweep of the plain and the mountains that rimmed it. When the clouds lifted I could see the three stony peaks called the Three Marys that marked Tres Marias, where the railroad ended. I wondered if the work on the railroad was going forward, and strained my eyes to scan the mountains through field glasses not equal to the distance.

The column of troops I watched for never came marching across the plain. There was no life or

movement at all. Most of the time the whole valley seemed to swim in an opalescent haze, indescribably soft. There were encounters of our men with the Zapatistas, I know, but they were hid from me by the smoky veil that clothed the scene with a lying peace. It was like a mirage. But sometimes I saw the slow wheel of a *zopilote* (buzzard) before it dived. Early in the morning and at sunset the awesome, snow-cooled peaks of the volcanoes, Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl, would float above it all in a kind of climax of remoteness. I looked for them day after day. The Mount That Smokes and the Sleeping Woman had always had a fascination for me. Now they roused in me a fear that grew and filled me and stretched me apart. What are you, they seemed to say, that the wheels should turn aside lest you be crushed? A firefly flickering in the night of time!

“I am I,” I cried. “I *live!* I *will* not be snuffed out. This is not my Revolution! I am a stranger here! This is not my country! These are not my people! I hate it — hate it!”

But my cry was lost on a breath of air. Ixtaccihuatl was a dead woman, quiescent and untouchable; and the Mount That Smokes was still. Yet as I looked the afterglow fell fleetingly on the Sleeping Woman and touched her with life, and she was not a dead woman at all, but a woman asleep and waiting. And then the warmth faded from her bosom and she was cold as ice beside the lover who killed her in his



MOUNT THAT SMOKE'S



frenzy, and would not awaken for him. And I saw on the side of the cone of Popocatepetl the mutilated stump of the spur where he had blown off his own shoulder in his passion; and I perceived that there were resistances against which the will shattered like glass. Some things could not be forced. A sense of the futility of fury and my own frantic railing engulfed me.

“What if it is not your Revolution?” the mountains seemed to say. “When the plough is in the furrow, the farmer does not turn back for a worm.”



CHAPTER XIII

WE grew accustomed to hunger. There was no longer the sharp, craving pain always with us, but a weakness that mercifully dulled all feeling. There was no panic, no hysteria. Indian fatalism, Latin grace, and Nordic pride saw us through. We starved with dignity in Cuernavaca. Mrs. Mestrezat never complained of the bad bargain she had made in coming to Cuernavaca for me. I had long since closed the kitchen and dining room of the Bella Vista, as there was nothing to cook, and let most of my servants go. The three boys and girls who remained grew so weak they could hardly work, and were very quiet. The officers tightened their belts and, with a dash of their old impudence, said it was too bad the girls were losing their figures.

Chacón's friend, Lieutenant Colonel Zaldo, was in charge of what food supplies there were in Cuernavaca; a nice-looking fellow of Cuban descent, I think, who had taken a great fancy to little Catherine. He hardly ever came to the house without a biscuit or

some tidbit tucked away in his pocket for her. They had a kind of game: he would say, with a long face, that there was nothing for her to-day, and then she would pounce on him and go through his pockets till she found the precious morsel he had saved for her. Thanks to Chacón, we had rice and beans to the end: a cupful of beans in the middle of the day between the four of us — the captain, Mrs. Mestrezat, Catherine, and me — and a cupful of rice in the evening, again for all four of us. Where or how he got the beans and rice we never knew — nor asked.

Occasionally we saw German Cañas, the man I had recognized on the train that had brought the Mestrezats and me and treacherous Helene Pontipirani to the town. He, like myself, had intended to return at once to the capital, where his wife and child were waiting, and had been trapped in Cuernavaca by the destruction of the railroad. He must have thought it hard luck to have met me on the train, but he was too nice to say so. Toward the end we shared our food with a German, a master brewer, whom we felt constrained to take in because he was a foreigner like ourselves. He was a coarse, surly fellow who sometimes annoyed me by his crudity, but Chacón would laugh me out of my vexation.

“Oh, Mother,” he would say, “don’t be like that! Everyone can’t be nice like you and me.”

The rumors that General Ojeda would not attempt to hold Cuernavaca much longer became persistent. Evacuation was in the air. That fiery old warrior

Ojeda did not himself want to evacuate. He had no liking for deserting his post against orders and exposing his troops and their charges, the people of Cuernavaca, to running the terrible gauntlet of the Zapatistas. But his officers swore they would not starve like animals forgotten in a pen, and that rather than this they would make a dash for safety, taking with them the civilians.

To my horror, just at this time Mrs. Mestrezat fell ill. A fever came on and she was obliged to stay in bed. I was obsessed with the fear that Mrs. Mestrezat would not be able to leave when the troops started. I felt responsible, for I had brought her to Cuernavaca. The doctor said, what I knew only too well, that she must have nourishment. I found that a neighbor of mine, a very nice little Mexican woman, had four chickens hidden away for her son and herself. I begged her to sell them to me, offering five times the normal price.

"But what is money now, *señora*?" she said reasonably. "One cannot eat gold and paper."

"My friend is sick," I said, at the end of my tether. "Ah," said my neighbor simply, "a sick woman. That is different."

I got the chickens. With them I made a strong broth which helped Mrs. Mestrezat greatly. In a few days she was able to walk about, much to my relief.

I began to look for animals that we could use for flight. There were few to be had, as so many had

been killed for food. I was able, however, to secure five mules from the manager of the *hacienda* of Temixco, who was only too glad to let me have them instead of leaving them for the Zapatistas to steal or the Federals to "use." When the mules were brought for my inspection, little Catherine was much excited at the idea of a long ride, and wondered with great curiosity whom the animals were for. I guessed what was going through her mind and explained carefully to her that one was for her mother, one for me, one for Carmen, the manservant I was taking with me, and one for his wife, with Catherine on the saddle behind her; the last mule being for valises, medicines, brandy, a demijohn of water, and so forth. Catherine was highly indignant that there was not a mule for her. We could not make her understand why she could not have one, although I did my best to explain to her that there was not another mule to be had in Cuernavaca.

Amid floods of tears and stamping of feet because she could not have a mule, Catherine at last went to her room to forget, as we thought, about the matter. About eight o'clock that evening, while we were sitting dismally in the dark,—as we had ever since the destruction of the light plant,—we heard a *flop-flop, flop-flop, floppity-flop*. What in the world was coming? We looked out with some curiosity and there was a soldier leading a very old, experienced-looking, big-footed, lanky white horse. Catherine walked by the side of the animal, her face beam-

ing as she exclaimed, "Now, I am going on my own horse!"

She was delighted with what she had done. It seemed that instead of crying herself to sleep in her room as we had thought, she had slipped out and gone to one of the barracks to beg for an animal. The old white horse had been given to her gladly, as he was of no use.

A white horse! Fine signal corps for the enemy! Captain Chacón jumped up and told Catherine the horse would not be permitted to go along on any account, as he would make a wonderful target of all of us as we went along the road. He ordered the soldier to take the horse back to the barracks at once.

Catherine's anger was beyond bounds. She stormed, "I am an American and can do as I like!" Poor little girl, nine years old, thinking this meant anything. With her heart almost broken and another flood of tears, she saw the tail of her horse disappear around the corner. It was almost too much for the rest of us. In our weakened condition we could hardly keep from crying with the child as her mother took her off to bed. The great white horse was the picture I had always had in my mind of Rosinante, the horse Don Quixote rode in his famous adventures, fighting for right against wrong.

We soon saw signs that General Ojeda would evacuate quickly, driven to the decision by his officers, who threatened to shoot him if he refused. Permission was given the troops to rob the houses of

anything they could find to eat — a sensible order, as the townsfolk would go with the troops and there was no point in leaving anything for the enemy that we could use in our flight. What a feast we had when a soldier sold us two pigeons he had stolen! We paid four times what they were normally worth, and were happy to get them at the price.

I bought bandages and medical supplies from the Red Cross doctor, to load on the pack mule in case any of us were wounded on the way. Mrs. Mestrezat and I began to sew the eight thousand pesos I had into our clothes. The money was in paper bills. She put three thousand pesos in a little suède bag that she was to wear around her waist, under her clothes. The five thousand we sewed into my riding skirt. We were working at this one morning when we were startled by a great shout, "Look! Look! Up at Tres Marias!" We dropped the skirt and the money and ran outside. "Help is coming," I thought. "We are saved."

High on the crest of the mountains a great beacon blazed. Flame and smoke rolled across the sky.

"It is the lumber yard burning," said an officer softly. "The Zapatistas have taken Tres Marias!"

We knew we should have to run then; and not merely to the railroad. We should have to head across the mountains to distant Toluca, in the State of Mexico.

Our five mules, like ourselves, were suffering from lack of food, and it was hard work for my *mozo* to

find even grass for them during the days we were awaiting orders to start.

Finally the order was given. Our feelings were fearful. Spies and snipers had got into the town at the last. The men stationed at our outpost, the horse-shoe-shaped hill, abandoned their post and left cannon and ammunition for the enemy. They told our commander they had hidden and buried the munitions, but this was a lie. They were traitors. That night they were joined by eight or ten other officers and their men, and all deserted to the Zapatistas, taking with them quantities of arms, munitions, and rapid-firing guns. It was to secure these that they had returned to Cuernavaca. We were almost afraid to start with the remaining soldiers, not knowing how they might behave on the perilous journey before us.

All the night before we started was spent in destroying the army equipment we could not carry away with us to prevent it from falling into the hands of the enemy. Hundreds of thousands of pesos' worth of cartridges, shells, uniforms, blankets, saddles, and so on, were destroyed, piled up in the courtyard of an old mansion which had been used as a warehouse, and ignited with explosives.

It rained all night long. The trees in the plaza were dripping, and the poor people of the town huddled against the walls of houses or wandered aimlessly through the streets. Our mules were saddled and waiting, and I had pinned on me a little British flag the British Minister had once given me for a talisman

— a pretty gesture, his gift, I had thought, not dreaming the time would ever come when I might need the flag. The rain splashed drearily in the patio of the Bella Vista, flattening the roses. I listened for the singing jet of the fountain, but its tinkle was drowned out by the rain. I took a lighted candle and wandered curiously through my abandoned hotel. It was as though I had never seen it before. I noted with a kind of detached appreciation the noble sweep of the great stone staircase and the fineness of the wrought-iron rails; the rightness of the furnishings I had bought. I went into my *cantina*. It struck me that I had never been in it before, not since I furnished it. A *cantina* was a part of a hotel, necessary for the convenience of guests, but I left my guests to do their heavy drinking alone. One of my boys was working behind the bar — Pilar, his name was. He had been fresh and rosy-cheeked, but was now painfully thin. He was reaching down bottles from the shelves, and he paused to smile at me.

“It will not take much longer, *señora*. I have hidden the champagnes and Rhine wines already. The Zapatistas will never find our good sauternes and Burgundies!”

Still holding the candle aloft, I went up to my own rooms. They were, I saw, pretty rooms. Homelike rooms, one might call them, with pleasing pictures and books and easy chairs and the piano standing open. I ran my hand over the keys. And then the strangeness fell away from me. This was my piano that I

had always loved. I saw myself playing on it when I was first married, singing to my dead husband. I heard the awkward venturesome notes of my little son and daughter sounding out the keyboard. I remembered the piano standing in the little public drawing-room of the tearoom in those first anxious, hopeful days, and how I had played for my first friends in Cuernavaca, eager to please them and make them like me. All the sentiment of my adult life centred about that piano. My heart was wrenched. For the first time I had the feeling that I was leaving my home.

It seemed that I could not bear to leave these things so intimately mine to the touch of vandals. And, sick as I had been of this place where I had suffered fear and starvation, a great longing to stay swept over me; a dread that if I left I might never return to strum on my piano, or hear again the lilt of the fountain in the morning and lay my hand against the thick cool walls of my house, four hundred years old. The years that I had lived there, my mind had dwelt on other things. Now, in the moment of losing it, I found my home. . . . A draft came in through one of the long windows that stood slightly ajar. As I moved to close it, I saw in the dripping street below the shadowy forms of men huddled in their *zarapes*, their wide-brimmed straw hats pulled down to shelter them, and women wrapped in the thin shawls which cradled their babies, clutching little bundles — all they could carry with them in their flight.

Downstairs in the *cantina* Pilar was still at work; many bottles remained.

"Never mind the rest, Pilar," I said. "Call the poor people into the *portal*. The wine will warm them for the journey."

The poor wretches crowded gratefully into the *portal* as we opened the bottles and passed the wine. There was the smell of wet wool *zarapes* and wine, and the flicker and flare of candlelight on my verandah; and outside the chill darkness and the steady beat of the rain. Now and again there would be a great rocking explosion and a pillar of flame would burst against the sky from the courtyard where the troops were destroying munitions. In their weakened condition, the wine worked quickly on the people, fuddling them a little and dulling the consciousness of their misery, so that one or two forgot themselves and began to sing a little. I did not have words to say in Spanish what I felt, but I tried to make clear to them my pity and good will. We were all in the same plight, painfully uprooted from Cuernavaca. They had lost their homes. I had lost mine. Death stared us in the face. We were all in the way of losing our lives because we had loved this town and lived there. They must have understood something of this, for they smiled back at me, with pity and with friendliness. As I moved about, trying to help, a kind of peace came over me. I was like a skater who has been struggling to stand and suddenly finds his balance. I no longer felt alone, apart. Dis-

tinctions of nationality, race, class, meant nothing now. I was with these people. I was one of them.

Shortly before daybreak we started, Thursday morning, August 13 — an unlucky date, as well it proved for us.



CHAPTER XIV

IT was a pitiful sight to see the deserted houses and pass through the silent streets; not a person to be seen — all fled or hidden for fear of the Zapatistas. Although we did not know it, the greater part of the troops and townspeople had started long before daybreak — about eight thousand in all. Our little party was among the last to leave, which proved nearly fatal for us. Before we were out of sight of Cuernavaca the Zapatistas closed in behind us and attacked the rear of our column.

The attack was so sudden and violent that those marching at the very last of our line were cut off and captured by the rebels. We would have been caught with them if Chacón had not rushed us forward. At the shock of finding the enemy on our heels, an officer near us lost his head. "Here they are!" he cried and, striking his horse, started off at a furious gallop. A captain drew his pistol to shoot him and save the morale of the troops. But Chacón, who loved the man, was quicker. He stopped him with a ringing

shout, "*Espera, Hermano, quédate con nosotros.*" (Stop! Brother, stay with us)

Our mules were faithful, but far from fast. The enemy was pursuing and bullets whizzed and whined about us. We dismounted and pulled the mules by their bridles, to encourage them to a quicker gait. For five hours, exerting our utmost strength, we tugged them along, and so forced them to a faster pace than their stubborn little legs would have accorded us had we been on their backs. "Communistic mules!" said Chacón — working only when we worked with them.

Although we were still on the level plain, the roads were almost impassable. The torrential rains that had been falling nightly had washed out great holes, and the wheels of our heavy artillery had dug deep ruts. The long procession of people and animals ahead of us had trodden the mud to a thick clinging paste that held our feet when, at every step, they sank into it.

Strain as we would to outdistance our pursuers, the enemy kept pace. The firing went on. Now and then our cannon, ten of them, replied with deafening roar to the crack of the rifles. When I saw our pursuers firing upon the Red Cross ambulance and heard the bullets strike, I fainted by a stone wall. A poor soldier's woman stopped to kneel beside me and put *tequila*, a strong native liquor, in my mouth and nose. This revived me. At that moment Chacón rode up and dragged me out of the path of those who

rode after us. My mule, saddle and all, was lost. But my manservant took his wife on the saddle behind him, and I was able to ride on the mule brought for the woman and little Catherine. We set the child on the pack mule. In this way we rode until we reached the *hacienda* of Temixco, where we were allowed to rest for ten minutes.

We swarmed into the enclosure and, safe from the bullets that flew outside, the weary men threw themselves down on the grass. Mrs. Mestrezat and I sat on a stone coping in the blessed shade of a *ciruela* tree and leaned against the wall of a house. We pushed off the big straw hats we had worn for protection against the rays of the tropic sun. Chacón, with Catherine trotting at his heels, brought clean, sparkling drinking water from the *hacienda* fountain to cool our throats. We stretched our arms and legs in exquisite relaxation. For the moment we were safe, and by comparison with the hours spent in the saddle and on foot we felt luxuriously comfortable.

It seemed a moment, no more, when we were ordered to mount our mules and be on our way. There was no time to lose. Our general, leading the long column, was already far ahead, and with him the artillery that was our best defense. The safety of Temixco was more an illusion than a reality. The rebels had already sacked the *hacienda* and gutted house, church, and sugar mill. The charred and blackened walls that had sheltered us temporarily were weakened by fire and not to be depended on.

We passed, as we fled, two more *haciendas*, where the buildings had been set fire to only recently and were still burning. The tongues of flame told eloquently the hatred of Zapata and his followers for those who had amassed the wealth represented by these sixty- and seventy-room mansions. Zapata had seen whole villages razed in order that the *haciendas* might have more land for sugar cane, the Indians who had lived there scattered to seek new homes or held to work like serfs for those who had robbed them. Zapata was avenging now the villages of Acatlipa, devoured by the *hacienda* of Temixco, San Pedro and Cuauchichinola, swallowed up by the *hacienda* of the hospital, and the rest. The Zapatistas had treated all alike — masonry, dumb animals, and human beings; there were only desolation, devastation, and we ourselves, fleeing for our lives.

We were on the wrong side.

Incredible and appalling as it was to me, I comprehended that to this just fury that swept the valley like fire purging pestilence my friends and I were numbered among the plague spots! Individually — as I knew our people — we were good, brave, suffering, loving justice and freedom in our muddling way. But together — as the rebels saw us — we were soldiers of the government, people of the towns, owners of property; cogs in a system that had enslaved free men.

Let him who runs read — well we knew we were reading history as we ran.

Greater danger lay ahead for us. We were leaving the plain and entering the mountainous region that surrounds the Valley of Cuernavaca. We were entering the homeland of Zapata, who knew and loved every rugged ridge! There were men in our train, born and reared in the State of Morelos, who could readily have shown us a shorter and easier route than the one we were taking; but they knew, and our general knew, that the most direct route would lead us into a trap and probably death for all of us. Zapata himself had gone ahead and was cutting us off from the more accessible roads. He was forcing us to make our way over roundabout trails and wagon tracks not meant for the passage of an army. We were a long-drawn-out, straggling column. Those of us in the rear did not know what was happening up in front. While we rested at Temixco, a Zapatista chief had tried to make separate terms with the officers of the rear guard; but they dared not trust his promises, as Zapata, whose word all men respected, was not there to guarantee them.

All afternoon we ploughed on, sometimes dragging our mules through mud and water, sometimes resting on their backs. The way was all uphill, now; we were climbing constantly, ascending the first ridges of the wide mountain barrier that separated us from Toluca, in the State of Mexico, the town we were heading for. The spicy tang of great pine trees was all about us. My breath came with stitches of pain because of the exertion in the high altitudes, for our climb had be-

gun at the mile-high elevation of Cuernavaca. How we suffered from thirst! There was no clean drinking water on our route, and we dared not turn aside to look for springs. We did not feel hunger, although we had started without anything to eat. A woman had brought each of us a cup of weak tea, with sugar, at the last moment before starting, and that was all we had had all day.

The time came when the weakest in our procession could no longer hold up and began to collapse on the way. Until then there had been a stoical silence in our ranks, no sound of complaint but the sobbing breaths of starved creatures whose strength was overtaxed. Now for the first time we heard cries of distress—the screams of the poor women who could not keep up with us, as they saw their neighbors going on without them. They knew that without the protection of our column they would either be shot or be carried away by the Zapatistas and never heard of again.

To cap it all, we were caught in two ambuscades. We lost two cannon and many men, for we had no defense against ambush. The mountain country we were passing through was gashed with gullies and gorges and walled with rock. It was sublimely beautiful country to look at,—even in our flight, I marked that,—but cruel to us. Our troops could not mass together for strength. As we fled over the narrow mountain trails we were a long thin file of

fugitives. Our enemies, concealed in the depths of green forest, shot at us as we moved past.

When we were ambushed the second time, there was terrible confusion and our little party became separated. Mrs. Mestrezat had a pistol drawn on her by two of the officers, who refused to let her go forward, telling her she must dismount and wait with the rest of the women while the infantry went ahead to safeguard the road. This seeming brutality was in reality a precaution for the safety of the women, but poor Mrs. Mestrezat was nearly distraught, as she knew the rest of us had gone on ahead. She hid with the other women wherever she could, behind rocks or bushes, until the Zapatistas could be driven back a little. She ran on until she came to a stream. There she fell into the water and would have been killed or carried off by the enemy, who were very close, if our good friend Zaldo had not seen her and come to the rescue. He fished her out of the shallow but very swift water and put her on his orderly's horse, which brought her to safety.

I, meanwhile, had been pushed on in front of the artillery. I was in no danger of being seized bodily by the Zapatistas, but people were dropping dead all around me, and again I fainted at the sight. Once more poor Federico Chacón had to drag me — and my mule — out of the path of those who were following.

It was a bad half-hour all around. My *mozo* was

shot through the hand, and in his pain and fright let our pack mule go. We lost everything — medicines and bandages, the hoarded bit of water that still remained to us, and even our good brandy intended for use in extreme emergency. I lost also my personal treasures. In the valises carried off by the "communistic" pack mule were old Spanish laces, fans, and shawls, which I prized for their beauty as well as for their value and rarity. I had brought them along to save them from the Zapatistas in Cuernavaca. How many times I have wondered to whom the mule did present them!

Little Catherine, fortunately, had been lifted off the valises before the pack mule ran away. When the heavy firing began she had been put in charge of the German brewer who had started out with us.

At last we reached the little town of Xochi, where we were to spend the night. Our first thought was to get together again, and Chacón and I were able to find Mrs. Mestrezat and my servants and hear what had befallen them. We could not find little Catherine and the German, but our worst fears were relieved when we were given positive assurance that they had reached the town safely. With that we had to be content. Mrs. Mestrezat had lost her mule when she was forced to dismount and take cover among the bushes during the ambuscade, but by a great stroke of luck she found the mule, still carrying her saddle, in Xochi. This was a great relief to all of us. We knew

our journey would last at least several days, and we were too weak to march long on foot.

Xochi was the village that served the *hacienda* of Puente. We glimpsed through the dusk the old stone bridge across the stream that gave the estate its name, and beyond the bridge the shadowy bulk of the house and the church that I remembered as particularly lovely. As yet the Zapatistas had not sacked Puente, and though we knew when next we saw it there would be only stark ruins remaining, there was a kind of joy in seeing it this last time as it had always been, stately and hospitable.

The evening was cool, and Chacón built a little fire to warm us. We sat there on the ground, the three of us, — Federico, Mrs. Mestrezat, and I, — dirty and disheveled, stiff and sore, and so tired that we wanted never to get up again. Presently our good friend Lieutenant Colonel Zaldo joined us, carrying under his arm a mysterious bundle. How he smiled when he whipped off the coverings and showed us what he had. Somewhere he had stolen a chicken. He had cooked it and was going to share it with us! From the pockets of his coat he even brought out a few biscuits to go with it. "Not young biscuit," he cautioned engagingly as we began to break into pitiable exclamations of joy, "not young biscuit — but very respectable. Honestly come by!"

He was a little light-headed, like the rest of us, at the prospect of food and warmth and safety and friendship after what we had endured all day. We

had had all of horror we could hold. We were like children on a picnic as we spread out the meal on the ground between us. Was it good! . . . For weeks we had eaten nothing but beans and rice, or tea and coffee with sugar. No milk or bread. No chicken! We tore every shred of meat from the bones and sucked them clean. We rolled the stale biscuit over and over in our mouths till the last crumbs slid down our throats. Good! . . . There are some things in life one always remembers with exhilaration. I say thoughtfully, and with finality, that I shall never forget Lieutenant Colonel Zaldo's delicious roast chicken — stolen, it is true, but all the better for that — and those motherly, middle-aged biscuits. Right out of the oven of a "down-South aunty," they could not have tasted better.

Little Xochi had one more joy for us — security for the night. A kindly woman placed a room in her house at our disposal, and Mrs. Mestrezat and I lay down on a small straw mat in the middle of the floor — the bare earth was all the floor there was — with eleven men lying around us in a ring, their rifles close at hand, to defend us in case of danger. They were desperate-looking fellows — soldiers, accustomed to harsh, rude living; rough men, you would call them if you did not know them. In the old days I should have been afraid to be alone with them. But now, when we had no other protection, Mrs. Mestrezat and I found them kind and gentle toward us day and night, although we were foreign women, strangers

to them. Most touching of all, as I look back, was their quick perception of our feeling, and their effort to efface themselves and seem unobtrusive to us.

But even with our guard of riflemen around us, it was impossible to sleep, for through the patter of the rain we could hear sounds of fighting all night long.



CHAPTER XV

THE quiet stars of early morning saw us again on our perilous journey.

The way out of Xochi lay through a narrow lane between thick stone walls, three and a half or four feet high, and the enemy took advantage of this to attack us on both sides. Our soldiers lined up to the right and left of the civilians, returning the fire as best they could, but there was a terrible loss of lives.

At the end of the walled lane was a swift stream that had to be forded, and a sharp ascent on the other side. In this stream and on the hill we lost many women and children, who, when the firing was hardest, threw themselves into the water. There they were either shot or trodden down by our animals in their wild efforts to get out of this trap. At this crossing we also lost a number of our officers. The Zapatistas were good shots, and among them were the Federals who had been deserting us all along: they knew at whom to shoot. When Colonel Pacheco, in command of the rear guard, was killed, the panic in

our ranks increased. His poor wife would not leave him, but remained at the side of her dead husband. . . . Better had she been shot with him than to have fallen into the hands of the enemy.

Fighting and pursuit went on all day. We found little Catherine and the German who had watched over her. How glad the poor child was to see her mother and me! The German told us proudly how brave she had been the night before, alone in a hut with a lot of strange men, but not crying at all. I took her on my mule with me. We were riding south, and in the thin, high air the heat of the sun was becoming unendurable. Catherine stripped off the light coat we had thrown across her shoulders to keep the sun from blistering her tender skin. She could not understand why, as she was cooler with the coat off, blisters were not more likely to come if she kept it on, and she was not one to yield to any argument she did not understand. Her mother could do nothing with her, and I was finally obliged to take her in hand. I said sternly that if she did not put on her coat we should have to leave her behind for the Zapatistas. This terrible threat was enough!

Our thirst was intense and grew worse as the day went on. We drank water from anywhere. The soldiers and officers were very kind. They would give me the last drop they had when I asked them for it. An officer broke off a piece of a lemon from which he was sucking the juice and handed it to me. I did

not have this refreshing morsel long, for a wounded captain on my other side asked me for it as soon as he saw it. I passed it to him — how he did enjoy it! Poor fellow — only a few months before he had lost his young wife, not more than nineteen years of age. The Zapatistas had carried her off.

All this while the pitiless fire of the Zapatistas kept on. Our men returned it as best they could, but they had to shoot as they ran. The Zapatista marksmen, prone on the hillside, picked them off. It was terrible to see them fall dead, and worse to see them fall wounded. The tragic *soldaderas* braced with their arms the wounded troops who could still stand up, and dragged them along, trying to keep pace with the rest of us. There could be no stopping to help the seriously wounded; the hoofs of the horses and mules that followed passed over them. We had doctors and nurses with us, but everything they had to work with had been lost on the way the first day of our flight. There were no bandages or medicines, no dulling narcotics to ease the wounded. I think I shall never forget the agony of a poor woman who was shot through the back on this part of the journey, yet obliged to walk, as our animals had been shot down on all sides.

I made the officers riding near us promise me that should Mrs. Mestrezat, her little girl, or I be badly wounded and unable to go on with the rest, they would at once put us out of our misery by shooting us, rather than leave us in the hands of the enemy. I am

sure any one of those brave men would have kept the promise. Again and again I thanked God that I had left my daughter in Mexico City and that she was not here among these horrors.

At last we saw in the distance the *hacienda* of Miacatlán, where we were to spend the night. Its staunch walls stood unharmed: it looked tremendous, feudal, safe. It seemed we could not wait for its gates to close behind us. Our soldiers, worn-out and hungry, shared this feeling. They began to behave worse and worse, refusing the order to stop and fight. A young officer with about three hundred men was either cut off by the enemy or deserted to join them. No one seemed to know what to do, or who was in command. General Ojeda, far ahead with the artillery, was completely out of sight. The officers did as they pleased, and there was general demoralization. The four of us, Mrs. Mestrezat, the German, Chacón, and I, with the little girl, managed to keep together. The captain watched closely, helping us off our mules to take shelter behind their bodies when the firing was hardest, helping us on again as quickly as possible. At one time we women and the child had to sit low behind a stone wall while the captain and the German did some hand-to-hand fighting for us.

Before reaching the *hacienda* of Miacatlán, we had to pass a small village. The village was apparently deserted, but Captain Chacón rushed us forward, and well he did. Those last in our column were caught. It was terrible to know we could not stop to

help them. Our own personal danger was increasing; our animals were giving out.

As if the exhausted mules understood, however, that rest and shelter were at hand, they made one last spurt that brought them safely inside the walls of the *hacienda*. Here we found General Ojeda and the rest of the army. After the open road, Miacatlán seemed strong as a fortress to us, with its foursquare buildings and solid stone outer wall, towering above our heads and bristling with armed soldiers. The enclosure was enormous, for the huts of the thousands of workers were built inside the wall.

Once we were inside, the Zapatistas ceased their firing. They knew our troops were ready for them. We heard we were to rest all the next day at Miacatlán — good news, but untrue.

Chacón was again all kindness and thoughtfulness for the Mestrezats and me. In spite of all we had been through, he kept his gay winning smile and his way of getting what he wanted. Somewhere in the deserted-looking village he found a woman whom he coaxed to make us weak chocolate with water. It was the first thing we had eaten that day. Later he took us to the *hacienda* church. He put us upstairs in the *curato*, where the priest had stayed, to rest and, if we could, to sleep. Meanwhile he tethered the mules that Mrs. Mestrezat and I had ridden, and his own horse and the German's, in the churchyard. The graves were green, and the starved animals got plenty of grass, which they needed sadly. Chacón

then went out on a second foraging expedition, from which he presently returned with joy in his face, and in his hands a little jug of heaven-sent milk with bits of bread floating in it. He knew this was the first milk and the first bread we had tasted in weeks.

"I declare," said Mrs. Mestrezat, with awe, "that man finds food when even the *soldaderas* can't!"

Still later we heard him moving about again in the churchyard below. Grinning up at us, he exhibited the greatest prize of all — a bag of corn he had found in a deserted house. What a feast the two remaining mules and the two horses had that night!

Most people have sat upright on church benches and slept, the sermon perhaps too metaphysical, or they out late the night before; but there was not a sermon, not a narcotic, that could bring sleep to us that night as we stretched out full length on the bare church benches. A thunderstorm broke over us and raged till almost daybreak, startling and fearful as only tropical storms can be. Between the crashing thunderclaps we heard a soothing sound: our animals munching corn — munching very loud, for the corn was very hard. Happy thought! A corn-fed gait might lend a faster pace than pulling them along, when we renewed our journey.

During the night word was brought to us that plans had been changed. Our spies, or "runners" as they call them, had learned that the Zapatistas were ahead of us, lying in wait. To avoid the trap that was laid for us we should have to double back in the

direction we had come, to find a safer route across the mountains! We were to resume our march at dawn. Mrs. Mestrezat and I were up before daylight, both feeling very weak and nervous. Whilst we were getting ready an officer came and begged us not to try to continue our journey. He said it would be impossible for our column to cross the wide mountain barrier; the Zapatistas were gathering in great numbers; they knew every inch of the ground and could swing their forces to oppose us more quickly than we could move to evade them. I was almost ready, then, to break down, for I knew the awful danger of staying where we were. Without our soldiers to man them, the stone walls of Miacatlán would not protect us long. Poor Mrs. Mestrezat almost fainted, and refused to move. She was not thinking of herself, but of the gruesome danger for her little girl.

When Chacón came to see what was keeping us, heard what the officer had told us, and saw our panic, he was furious. He took me by the hands and literally pulled me down the staircase.

"Get on your mules," he ordered grimly. "We will argue about it next week!"

We started off, and just in time. The Zapatistas swept down, cutting off our rear guard. Poor things, those who were left behind — the men taken prisoners, officers shot or hanged. Among them was our good friend Lieutenant Colonel Zaldo, who had prepared the feast of chicken and biscuit the first night out. It was here that Zapata and his chiefs

had hoped to cut us off. On we rushed, blessing the hard corn of the night before — Captain Chacón, Mrs. Mestrezat, the German, and I with Catherine. My servants were lost. It was impossible to pause to look for them. We knew that to save ourselves we must get to the front of the line where General Ojeda was riding with the pick of his soldiers, and the *ru-rales*, those native to that part of the country, to right and to left of him.

Our general was making no attempt to find an easy path, only a safe one — as safe, that is, as might be. Our column plunged desperately across country. My mule scrambled along narrow slippery ledges beside precipices that made one shudder to see them, scaling almost impossible heights, then lurching forwards, down into the horrifying depths of ravines or *barrancas* that had to be crossed. It bunched its feet and sat on its haunches, slipping and sliding amid a clatter of loosened stones, at such a pace I thought it could never stop. After a while I stopped feeling at every moment that this time, surely, we were headed into the abyss. And still we rushed on, up and down and up again, — thank God at a hard-corn pace, — racing with death.

About eleven o'clock that morning a young Zapista, who said he was a colonel, was brought to our general. He looked just like an American and may have been one — a soldier of fortune stirred by the love of war. He bore a message from Zapata: if our general would surrender and give up his arms,

Zapata would permit all women and children to pass. General Ojeda neither could nor would consent to this request. He made a counter-proposition: if the Zapatistas would permit all families to pass in safety, General Ojeda and his troops would wait and fight it out with them. He gave the Zapatista colonel a beautiful horse that belonged to the Spanish Consul at Cuernavaca so that he could deliver the message more quickly to his chief. A Federal officer was sent along with him.

Chacón would not let us loiter in the hope that the parley would be successful. "The Zapatistas are not fools, to come to open battle with our general and his trained soldiers. Faster!" he urged us forward.

For we were all aware that, aside from Zapata himself and a few of his selected troops, the Zapatistas knew little about fighting in the open and the tactics of organized warfare. These Indians were accustomed to shoot from the ambush, attacking by surprise and killing when and where there was no chance for self-defense. They have been charged with cowardice because they would not face their enemies, but *peones* with their backs bent for generations in tilling the soil and carrying heavy burdens had no chance to learn anything but subterfuge, duplicity, and hatred. These men of Morelos who harried our column were fighting for their homeland, to make it and keep it their own. Four centuries of bondage loomed behind them, and the fear that the

old order would be reëstablished goaded them like a spur. They had to win, in any way they could.

The women in our column marched silently. We understood from the beginning that nothing could be done to help us. Because they were men born of women, Zapata and our general had made an effort to save us; but the thing was not possible. There could be no yielding on either side, for the conflict was bigger than the fate of anyone caught in it. The soldierly honor of our officers who could die fighting for us, but not surrender, faced the implacable need of the Zapatistas to establish their land as their own. In that clash of irreconcilable forces, we women were as nothing. We accepted that.

Our column pushed on and dared not stop. Zapata was pursuing us. . . . His chief, Pacheco, had kept up with us. . . . The Federal officer, the young Zapatista colonel, and the beautiful horse — never returned.



CHAPTER XVI

THE ground underfoot grew rougher and rougher. We were riding over the *pedregal*, the lava flow spewed out by the volcanoes long ago. Our mules stumbled over rolling boulders and stepped into depressions in the pitted and porous rock.

And then, ahead and high above us in the mountains, we saw the town of Chalma, perched as if for safety in the rugged arms of a rocky slope. Chalma — a part of ancient Mexico, where in the days of the Aztecs there was a *teocalli*, a pyramid where prisoners of war were sacrificed to Ozteocotl, the gloomy god of the caves. Then came the crucified Christ and the legend of mercy to drive Ozteocotl back into the windy fastnesses of the mountains. On the inner walls of the houses and in the patios of the town, the Augustinian monks painted frescoes telling the history of Chalma, and the triumph of mercy.

We toiled with bursting lungs, not daring to rest, up the steep and almost impassable road — the penitential road that the pilgrims climb every year

to reach the shrine of the Crucified Christ of Chalma. I had seen the pilgrims to this holy place passing through Cuernavaca in the old days. They traveled at night in bands or companies and camped three days in the mountains round about Chalma, sleeping in the sheltered caves. How the sight of them running had touched me! Men and women smoothly trotting, with almost no motion of the body, one behind the other, singing a native hymn as they went; dressed in the costume of their birthplace, carrying little lighted lanterns to guide their way; the men with stout sticks to ward off the wild animals that lurk in the hills; the women, almost every one with a baby on her back, comfortably cradled and sound asleep in the long scarf knotted across her breast. . . . One night I had wakened to hear soft music in the street outside. The pilgrims were coming! I ran to my window. A man with a beautiful tenor voice was singing alone. He finished a verse of the sacred song, and suddenly at least fifty voices, men's and women's, joined in the refrain. Never shall I forget the sweetness of the music, the simplicity and reverence — the figures gliding along in the moonlight, smoothly, swiftly, as though eager to reach the feet of the Crucified Christ of Chalma, to pray and leave with him the burden of their cares and sorrows.

Little had I imagined that the day would come when I should be driven cruelly, like a hunted animal, to the place of the Crucified Christ of Chalma by

thousands of men who had gone there to pray! . . . Again I read, as I ran, the history behind the conflict. What are peace and plenty if their blessings are not for all? What is religion if it is not practised by those who teach it? . . . The Crucified Christ! As we stumbled up that heart-breaking ascent, it seemed to me that Ozteocotl himself was behind us, bent on slaking his bloodthirst of four hundred years.

The horrors of that afternoon seem impossible to believe.

On the road from Chalma to Palpam my mule was shot dead. The German took little Catherine up behind him. Federico Chacón put me on his own horse, and walked, leading the animal, a beautiful chestnut stallion that had been the pride of a great landowner long since fled.

Then came the terrible words, "All women and children together and the troops to the sides." We knew what was coming. Not a word was spoken as the men slipped out of the procession to form a thin line of defense on either edge of the narrow road, while the women and children huddled between, pressing together like frightened sheep. We were entering the mountain pass near Malinalco, the home of one of Zapata's chiefs. This chief and his men had made the boast that no enemy of theirs could pass through this defile and come out alive.

From a little rise, I saw that the trail ahead lay along the shoulder of the mountain that formed one



ROAD TO CHALMA



G-BILL

side of the gorge: a trail so rough and narrow in places that the vanguard of our column had to lengthen to single file, with the rock wall rising sheer on one side, and on the other the abyss.

I looked at my wrist watch and saw that it was four o'clock.

Suddenly the fusillade came — quietly at first, like the rising of the wind: a wave of bullets pouring from the green mountain side across the ravine, patterning against the rock and beating down our people as hail flattens the stalks of flowers. A kind of shuddering groan went through our column; and then there was the steady staccato of the Rexers and quick-firing guns our artillery turned on the mountain as they ran. But still death streamed from the bland hillside. The men around me lifted their rifles and fired at the puffs of smoke that rose across the gorge, hurling defiance at the hidden enemy as they fell. There was something monstrous in our helplessness, our inability to strike back one effective blow, that stripped us of human dignity and turned our men to raging beasts. Their snarls and screams and the terrible animal sounds they made in their throats as they fired mingled with the moans of the wounded and the shrill cries of the *soldaderas*, like howling Furies as they snatched the guns from the falling and passed them to those still on their feet. The town women fell on their knees and prayed, pulling their scarves over their heads, making no effort to flee from the falling bullets. A wounded

riderless horse got loose and crashed screaming back through our column. . . . Men and women dropped all about me, and the sickening stench of fresh blood welled up through the choking mist of powder. I thought my last hour had come.

Chacón, leading my horse, turned into the ravine to find shelter from the terrible fire. Here I had to dismount. As I reached the ground my footing gave way and I began to slip into the awful gorge, sliding between the legs of a horse left standing there — the rider dead below. The weeds and plants I clutched at bent and came uprooted in my hands, and I began to slide faster.

“Catch on to the saplings,” shouted Chacón. I saw then some small trees that had taken root in a crevice of the steep rock. These I managed to clutch and painfully worked myself into a kind of half-resting position, which I could hold till Chacón would be able to come to my rescue.

At that moment we heard little Catherine screaming — screaming for Captain Chacón to come to her. The German with whom she had been riding had put her down at the top of the ravine and gone on, leaving the little one standing there — perhaps thinking she might as well, with me, toboggan to its depths. Chacón, always chivalrous, ran to the frightened child. Fighting raged about them. He took her in his arms and, carefully picking his way, brought her down the slope to me. There was no place else to go. She slipped into the clump of saplings, and

clung to me. Meanwhile the fighting went on above and the horse had wandered off. Chacón went hurrying to look for it.

The child and I lay there waiting, waiting for we knew not what fate, when suddenly we heard it coming, as we thought. There was a tearing, crashing sound above us. A dead mule came hurtling down the steep side of the ravine, a man, or ammunition, on its back — all bound without stop for the bottom. We cowered flat against the rock, but as it passed us in its gravitation rush the mule struck me a blow near the spine that left my lower limbs almost paralyzed. When Chacón was finally able to come for us I had been unconscious for nearly half an hour, though I was still gripping the child and the saplings. Federico thought I had been shot, and Catherine was frantic and could not say just what had happened. When I revived I told him of the blow I had received. I was utterly helpless and in such terrible pain that I begged him to put me out of my misery and save himself and the child.

“Go on!” I said, “go on!” I thought of myself as already dead and out of it, and it exasperated me that Chacón should not understand this, and should stand there risking his precious life and the child’s by delaying.

He paid no attention whatever to what I said, but grabbed my arms and dragged me inch by inch out of the ravine, Catherine clinging to me as best she

could. He lifted me on his horse and placed the little girl in the saddle in front of me.

How we went on from there I hardly know. In a dazed way I was aware that we were going forward, always forward. I knew that, though many had fallen, soldiers still fought all around us; knew that their courage was protecting us, and knew a kind Providence was watching over them, over the little American girl and me. And the torturing will to live awoke again in me.

Through a haze of pain I understood that we were approaching the town of Malinalco — perhaps another trap. God help those who must enter the town on foot! Mrs. Mestrezat was by now among the infantry. Her mule had been shot dead under her. As for ability to run, or even walk, she might just as well have been an infant, so tired she was in body and spirit, her courage almost gone. I asked a soldier to take her on his mule. He refused, declaring his mount — a big strong animal — was too tired for a double load. Just then the German came along. When I asked him to help, he vowed his horse was as tired as the soldier's big mule. But he must have been shamed by the nobility of Chacón, who had given up his horse and rescued the child when the German abandoned her, and we finally persuaded him to give Mrs. Mestrezat a lift. I think he was sorry it had not been a one-way trip to the bottom of the ravine for the three of us women. Our general was far ahead and out of sight. No one

thought of giving orders to the soldiers, nor had they any thought of obeying them if given. The captain of artillery, at my request, took the child on his mule. This relieved my horse, and during the sharper attacks Chacón was able to vault up behind me. In this way we could press forward more quickly.

About nine o'clock, by my little wrist watch, our fast-dwindling procession marched wearily into Malinalco. Chacón and I found ourselves in front of the few remaining soldiers with a lieutenant colonel and his wife next to us. It was pitch dark in the town — not a sound to be heard. No one was allowed to speak. We were at the head of a narrow street, not knowing where to go or whether our general with the vanguard had stayed or marched on. The infantry was ordered to advance. Not a man moved. We waited. About twenty of our men finally went ahead for a few yards, but soon returned. They said they were being fired upon and could not see where they were going.

Chacón, who was mounted behind me on my horse, said to the couple beside us, "We four will lead, the rest follow — or we shall all be killed!" They agreed.

And so we rode in, Captain Chacón and I, the lieutenant colonel and his wife, leading our column into the town of Malinalco.

I had never led an army before. I did so with bowed head and body bent low to my horse's side

and neck, not so much in modest acceptance of my promotion as to shy the bullets my high position invited. At my side my first aide, the lieutenant colonel's wife, did the same.

As I look back on that awful experience, thinking it over, I know that we escaped with our lives only by a miracle at the hands of a beneficent Providence.

Every inch of my skin seemed set with tingling nerves that strained to absorb what my eyes could not see, as we rode on into what we thought must be the centre of the town. Someone lit a match and our suspicions were confirmed; the flare revealed just in front of us the town pump — or its equivalent. Across the way we saw a door opening. To our surprise, a light in the room inside silhouetted a respectable-looking woman trying to get rid of some of our soldiers who were begging for food. None of us had had a mouthful to eat all day, and the hunger of these poor fellows must have outstripped their fear and brought them sneaking ahead of the rest.

Captain Chacón lifted me off the horse and, with the consent of the woman who stood at the door, carried me into the house and laid me on what was at least called a bed — a straw mat stretched over two boards that had been raised above the floor. Federico then left me, to seek food for the horse, which was overtired. I knew he feared that without a good feed and water, as well as rest, the gallant animal would not be able to carry us the next day.

I was suffering mentally and physically — almost

mad with pain. The woman paid no attention to me. She had yielded to Chacón's commanding air, but perhaps she regretted her compliance. The soldiers were still at her door, their presence annoying her very much. She stood in their way so they could not enter, shaking her head at them impatiently. I tried desperately to attract her attention, for I knew it would be some time before Chacón would be able to return. But she continued to ignore me, standing there in the doorway with the impassive dignity some Indian women have, her arms folded quietly in the long *rebozo*. I thought of the little British flag the British Minister had given me in Mexico City, telling me not to fail to use it in any time of distress or peril. I held it out to the woman.

She turned quickly and came to me, her curiosity stirred. She had never seen a British flag before, but it was evident that she took the little emblem for something that indicated rank and importance. She now gave me her whole attention. I managed to make her understand that I was in great pain, that I was an Englishwoman, and that I would try to persuade the soldiers to leave if she would help me.

My flag had not failed me. The woman did not comprehend all I said, but she was impressed. To fulfill my part of the contract, I managed to convince the soldiers that there was no food or drink in the hut, and they left. I was now alone with the woman and well locked in—a dangerous predica-

ment, to be sure, but I was suffering too much to care for that or anything else.

After a time Chacón returned, and when the woman recognized his voice she let him in.

"Look, Mother. See what I have brought you." He had a little chicken and broth in a jug — stolen from some people escaping with us. There was no mine or thine with food in our starved column. Food was anybody's. He moved a small, makeshift table to my bedside, and as we ate he told me that he had not been able to find the rest of our party, though he had learned that Mrs. Mestrezat and Catherine and the German and my servants had all reached town safely. "*No hay café, señora?*" he asked with a smile, and the silent, sullen Indian woman reluctantly brought a cup of coffee for me. Into this Chacón poured some brandy he had with him, and after taking the combined stimulants I felt much better and stronger.

The woman began to have confidence in us. We had some conversation with her, and her respect increased to the extent that she brought her son to visit us — or to look us over.

The son was a big, strapping Indian, clean and unusually neat, as well as intelligent. He told us that both he and his mother had suffered much at the hands of both Federals and Zapatistas. They did not care who won so long as peace was restored to the country. He warned us to be very careful on our way to the town of Tenango in the State of Mexico,

telling us that we should encounter great danger on the way; but that if we succeeded in reaching Tenango, we should be able to get a train for the city of Toluca. From Toluca we knew we could proceed to Mexico City in safety. I do not know where he had found out these things, but all that this Indian told us was true.

The woman snuffed out the candle and she and her son rolled up in their blankets and went to sleep. Chacón, a seasoned campaigner, dropped off too. I lay awake on my straw mat, unable to move or turn because of the pain. I had not slept for three nights — at Xochi, at Miacatlán, or the night before we started. After a while a kind of numbness crept over me and I was no longer conscious of my body. The words of the Indian spun around in my head: "If you reach Tenango, you can get a train . . ." but my mind could not lay hold of their meaning. We had been running so long that life had become a blur of motion without sense or purpose. Crazy, unfocused pictures revolved slowly before me — perverse, distorted pictures: the stupid grimace of a man whose hand was shot off; my daughter, as a child, "dressing up" in my best high-heeled slippers; Chacón, very drunk. I fought against them and, as one struggles out of a nightmare, I was suddenly fully conscious.

There was no sound in the darkness but the breathing of Chacón and the woman and her son, but the stillness was vibrant and echoing, like the silence

that follows a crashing chord of music. My mind had never been so lucid and sensitized before. I perceived that the meaningless touch-and-go flight of the last three days — they seemed like centuries — had suddenly reached a climax. In these last days life had come to mean no more than the instinctive defiance of death.

But if we lived through to-morrow, we should be *safe*. . . .



CHAPTER XVII

BETWEEN two and three o'clock in the morning there was a knock on the door. Some Spaniards, friends of ours, stood outside. They had come to warn us to get up and start off immediately. The enemy was closing in upon us, they said, and escape would soon be impossible. The general and the artillery were already in motion. Chacón hurried off to get the horse.

This order, or warning, was either not received by all or, if received, was not understood. Many of our officers, soldiers, and families, utterly worn-out, slept on through the night—a fatal sleep. Our early start was our salvation. Just after we left the Zapatistas entered, capturing such officers as remained and shooting them, taking the soldiers prisoners, and allowing families to escape only as they had money to pay for their lives.

We heard the shooting behind us as we marched along under cover of darkness. It was still before daybreak when we found ourselves in one of the

terrible walled lanes where our people were always shot down. Fronting us was a dreadful mountain which we must climb on one side and go down on the other to get into the valley where Tenango lay.

Federico vaulted on to the horse behind me as the firing began. "Ay, Mother, *aquí empieza!*" (Here it begins), he said, clinging to me. We pressed on as fast as the horse would carry us, with the fighting raging all about. From time to time Chacón got off the horse and walked, to lighten the load. For hours we struggled on up the mountain, leaving a line of dead men, women, and children behind. The horse's flanks were heaving, his eyes dilated. At last we were over the crest. Even in my agony, I reined in my mount and paused, awed by the sweep of the open country that lay beneath us, drinking in the thin cold air. Federico was on the ground, stroking the horse's muzzle, whispering words of affection and encouragement in his ear.

And then I saw below us the little town of San Francisco, with its green plaza and white flags flying everywhere — the biggest hanging from the church tower. I thought our troubles were ended, for we knew Tenango was not far away, where we should find those who would help us.

"Ay, Federico, *banderas blancas!*" (white flags) I cried, my voice breaking.

"*Que importa!*" (What of it!) said Federico. "*Vete, vete*" (Get on, don't stop a minute).

He guessed the truth: this was the last trap laid

for us. White flags and women standing at their doors to offer our starving men *tortillas* and water to quench their thirst. Treachery, cruelty, and the meanest cowardice! Our men were caught and stabbed to death. Our column had to cross the plaza, and snipers concealed on the roofs and in the tree-tops fired on us as we scuttled across the open. We left our dead on every side. A poor woman trying to hold on to my saddle strap was shot through the head. The chief nurse of the Red Cross fell dead behind me and was left in the street.

We fought our way — what was left of us — out of the shambles and on down the slope of the mountain, the soldiers firing on either side of us for their lives and ours. I saw little Catherine in the train and took her again on my horse. Poor little waif! She had not found her mother in Malinalco, and had spent the night with the officers. She never complained, but all the cockiness was out of her; it was pitiful to see her so meek and still.

I heard my name called weakly. Under a laurel tree by the side of the road lay German Cañas, our friend who had come to Cuernavaca on the ill-fated train that brought Helene Pontipirani, the spy, and me. I dismounted and went to him. His face was gray.

“Good-bye, Señora King,” he said. “I am finished. You have always been a friend to me. . . . You will tell my family, no?”

I thought he had been shot, but he had simply

collapsed from exhaustion and starvation. A man had begged the loan of his horse for a little while, so that he might rest. German Cañas had consented, for he thought the poor devil even weaker than himself. The man and the horse had gone off and never come back. "*Adiós, Señora King. . . .*"

"Don't say that!" I implored him. "Oh, Señor Cañas, we are almost there. Won't you make just one more try? Think of your wife and your little girl. . . ."

"Pull yourself together, man," said Chacón brusquely. "You can't die on us now!"

He was tugging at him, an arm around his shoulder, trying to raise him to a sitting position. Cañas clasped his hand. The sweat stood out on his forehead.

"*No puedo . . .*" he said. "I cannot."

"*Sí puedes, hermano!*" pleaded Chacón fiercely. He hailed a soldier who rode a horse. "Take care of this man!" he ordered. Together they placed our friend in the saddle and steadied him.

Chacón himself was on foot. I had his horse, and now that Catherine was with me there was no room for him to jump on behind, as he had done before to rest. The heavy firing on one side and the deep ravine on the other prevented us from leaving the narrow mountain road for safer places. It seemed we could not live through this.

"Only a little farther, Mother," Chacón encouraged me.



GRINDING CORN



Suddenly an Indian appeared, a white flag in his hand. He approached our general, whom we had overtaken, to say that General Carranza's men were in Tenango and would help us. There was no stopping to listen to what the messenger had to say, for the firing was incessant. He was made to walk in front of our general as he talked. Our men were desperate and said that if this was another trap set for us, we must all die — which no one seemed to dread, as we had already suffered so much that death instead of more treachery would have been a happy release.

General Carranza, we knew, was one of the strong leaders from the north who had come marching down to avenge the shameful murder of President Madero. He led a revolution to cast out Huerta for having usurped the highest post in Mexico by means of a crime.

The troops in our column were government men, owing allegiance to President Huerta. It was of a piece with the rest of their luck that they should have fled straight into the hands of the Carranzistas! But the Carranzistas met us with mercy. No bullets! They had an eye toward converting our men to their cause.

The firing behind us ceased. The Zapatistas had no desire to match their strength against that of the fresh, well-equipped Carranzistas. Not a word was spoken. We marched on in deadly silence, all women and children to the front. Out of the eight thousand

who had started from Cuernavaca, only two thousand were left. All our artillery was lost, all provisions gone; we ourselves were torn, wounded, and hungry, not caring much what they did to us.

The Carranzistas stationed along the road, leaning on their rifles, looked at us curiously. I saw in their looks what a cruel, pitiable sight we were. I knew then that my hair was matted with dust and my eyes reddened and swollen from sleeplessness and the fierce sun. I saw my hand on the reins, dirty, the broken nails still holding the earth of the *barranca*, where I had dug my fingers into the wall of the gorge as I fell. I saw that we were smeared with mud, our garments stiff with blood and filth, our faces all set in the same stark lines. We were more like animals than people, foul-smelling, indistinguishable, all the niceties of breeding and sentiment, all the fastidious habits that made us ourselves, rubbed out. These things had been the protection of our ego; without them we were like wounded beasts crawling to cover. I shrank from the gaze of the men by the roadside like someone naked in a bad dream. I wanted to cry, "This is not I!"

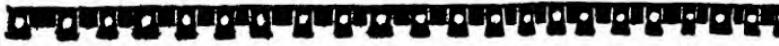
About two o'clock we entered the main street of Tenango. Here everyone was stopped and searched, and all disarmed except the captain and myself. Chacón was leading the chestnut by the bridle and the little girl was clinging on behind me. The soldiers reached for my pistol and the rifle that lay across the saddle, but Chacón stopped them with a

friendly gesture. "Don't take her pistol. She is a foreigner and suffering." I showed my little British flag to prove what he said was true, and the captain and I were allowed to pass without having anything taken from us. The German brewer behind us was not so lucky. He was worn-out and on edge with all that we had endured. When a Carranzista demanded his rifle he swung it like a club and would have brought the butt down on the fellow's head, if Chacón had not curtly recalled him to his senses. The troopers took all he had.

In the little plaza of the town a band was playing.

I felt I could hold up no longer; the reaction was setting in, overcoming me. Tears poured down my face. Three men who were standing on the street corner came to us and asked if I had been wounded. When they heard I was hurt and in pain, one of them said he would take me to his wife. We reached his home. . . . I was lifted off the horse and put on a bed of the same kind as before, a mat on boards. The man sent his little boy to fetch a doctor at once. His wife began, very gently, to undress me. She was Indian, young and pretty and radiant with pity. She looked to me like the Virgin of Guadalupe herself. I was weeping uncontrollably.

"It's all right, Mother," said Chacón. "You are safe now . . . you can rest. . . ."



CHAPTER XVIII

No one could have been kinder to Catherine and me than this man and his wife who had taken us into their house. They did everything possible to make us comfortable overnight, with no thought for their own inconvenience. Poor woebegone little Catherine curled up without a word and went to sleep, like one of the thin uncomplaining kittens that live in alleys and learn to sleep anywhere. I saw the Mexican woman stoop and lay her hand lightly on the hair of the little American girl. "*Pobrecita!*" (Poor little thing), she said. She was herself the mother of eight children, in spite of her youth. She had been married, she told me, at fourteen.

The next morning early, word came to us that we could get a train for the city of Toluca, the large town close to Mexico City which had been our goal when we fled from Cuernavaca. Before I left I made my host a present of my rifle. He was so overjoyed by the present that he could scarcely believe that I really meant to give him the weapon. I never knew

this man's name, only his title — *presidente municipal*, mayor of the town. I left in his charge the chestnut stallion which had brought Chacón and the child and me through such awful dangers, and wrote out a paper for him promising that he would be repaid for the expense of keeping the animal by the British Minister, Sir Thomas Hohler, at our Legation. I knew if I invoked the name of England every care would be taken of the beautiful thoroughbred and he would not fall into the hands of the troops.

It hardly seemed possible that we were actually on our way to Toluca — in a train — no fighting going on outside! What a relief to ride in a smooth-running, or comparatively smooth-running, day coach away from bloody battle scenes, from the sight of the dead and the cries of the dying; with only the hum of wheels over steel threads of rails to lullaby a tired soul to sleep. It was a ride of an hour and a half from Tenango to Toluca. At first the sight of hundreds of armed Carranzistas at all the stations along the way filled me with fear; but I understood that it was their presence which made me safe. Gradually I relaxed, and the black shadows of past horrors began to fade.

Toluca was full of soldiers, and there was no room for us in the inns. The German who had traveled with us was connected with the brewery in this town, and in desperation Chacón and I and the child drove out to the brewery and begged him to find a room there that we might use, or to tell us of some place

where we could go. He sent us to the glass factory. The manager of the glass factory was very kind. He sent us to his own house, and his wife took charge of Catherine and me. How strange and blissful it felt to lie propped in a real bed with a soft mattress and pillows, and smooth sheets smelling of soap and sunlight and a hot iron. I ate from a tray with a white napkin on it, and flowered dishes: strong broth with tiny dumplings, and fresh white bread. The little German woman, my hostess, was an angel of mercy, nursing me and trying to make me forget the awful dangers we had passed through.

Little Catherine, with the resilience of childhood, regained her strength quickly. Rest and good food filled out the painful hollows all over her. With her strength, her independent spirit returned. One morning I heard her shouting *crescendo*, "No, no, no! I take my bath in the afternoon!" and her little feet clattered as she raced down the stairs. It was rather dreadful of her, considering how good our hostess had been to us; but it was funny and heartening, too. It meant that Catherine, at least, was herself again!

I was not so lucky. Day after day the doctor told me that I must stay in bed a little longer, and I was too weak to wish to disobey him. Finally he said that at the end of two weeks he would permit me to make the trip to Mexico City. It was not a long trip, but with conditions as they were, any trip was bound to be a strain on me. I counted the days like

a child before Christmas. Mexico City meant to me my daughter, news of my son away at school, and security. I hoped that among the familiar faces of relatives and old friends I should learn to feel safe again.

While I was convalescing in this Toluca home, I learned that Mrs. Mestrezat had been terribly wounded in the small town of San Francisco, where the trap of white flags had been set for us. She had been lifted on, and then tied on, a mule belonging to a Chinaman, who was ordered to walk by the side of the animal with the soldiers. Before she was wounded, she had dropped to the rear and faced the deadly end of a revolver several times. As soon as I was able to go out, I went to see her in the hospital where she had been taken by the Red Cross. She was being well cared for, but had suffered greatly and was very weak. She seemed quite without hope, as though she were painfully struggling back to life not because she wished to live, but because she felt a burden of duty still to be discharged toward Catherine and her son. It seemed to me horribly unfair that the impersonal destruction of war should have laid low Mrs. Mestrezat, who was a noncombatant and a stranger, and who had gone to Cuernavaca only because she had to, to earn a living for herself and her children. I thought fate could have spared this brave woman. Her plight troubled me the more because there was little I could do to help it.

One of the hardest things for me in Toluca was

the visit of the postmaster's wife. Our postmaster in Cuernavaca had sent his wife to Mexico City when the situation in Cuernavaca became dangerous, but he had remained in the town because of his office. He had been with us in our pitiable flight across the mountains. His wife in Mexico City heard that the remnant of our column of refugees had reached Toluca, and came to Toluca to find her husband and care for him. Now her husband had been killed in the plaza of San Francisco, and the officers told her so. But the poor woman would not believe that he was dead, and begged me to give her some shred of hope. I had to tell her that I had seen her husband fall.

The most tragic thing of all, however, was the news that while we were isolated from the world in Cuernavaca, war had broken out in Europe. France, Belgium, Germany, and my own England were in arms, and over them was the shadow of the horrors I had just experienced. A young German, a friend of my hosts, was in the habit of coming every day to read the newspapers to me, and one day I said to him, "Why are you so kind to me? Do you feel no bitterness because our countries are at war?" For he was young, and the young are seldom patient or tolerant.

He said, "Mrs. King, I went to school in England. My sister married an Englishman. I love England. And yet, if I could get out of the ports of Mexico, I would go into the trenches and kill every Englishman

I could, because the English are fighting my country."

"And our men would do the same," I said, knowing them; and marveled at the magnificent stupidity of it all.

Chacón came often to see how I was getting along. To my relief, he was getting on very well with the Carranzistas in power in Toluca, though he had belonged to an opposing faction. Our recent terrible experiences had left no visible mark on him, and he always came radiating happy smiles and a kind of natural goodness. With the rest of us more or less on edge because of the troubles in Mexico and the troubles in Europe, he seemed to me the sanest person I knew. No amount of propaganda or even of cognac could make a fanatic of Federico, for he was at home with his own kind. He fought because liberty sounded like a good thing to him, and because he was naturally fitted to defend and protect those who could not look out for themselves.

When I was strong enough, he took me for a drive. I noticed that he was already bowing to most of the pretty girls, and he talked unconcernedly about the merits of the rival *cañones*, the winning little boy who polished his boots, and a row that had broken out in the barracks when two men were caught cheating in the same card game.

"Three aces of hearts, Mother!" he said, roaring with laughter. "And all on the board at once."

It struck me that the Revolution, with all its

horrors, was the happiest thing that had ever happened to him. No one had troubled to teach him how to use his tremendous vitality and good will in an orderly society. But war released his energies, and danger called out the best in him.

As our carriage skirted the central plaza, a man approached and inquired if I was one of the two foreign ladies who had been with the refugees from Cuernavaca. On learning that I was, he told us that the American dentist had something important to communicate to me. He pointed out the sign, *Dentista Americano*, and Chacón and I went immediately to the office, although we could not imagine what the American dentist could wish to say to me.

The dentist proved to be a pleasant fellow, and made interested inquiries about my recent adventures. Finally he asked a question I thought singularly inquisitive. He asked if I had lost anything of value on the way.

“Anything of value!” I retorted. “Only my health and peace of mind and all the personal treasures I had brought away on the pack mule!”

“But was there nothing else?” he persisted; and now I perceived that there was some purpose behind his questions.

“Why, yes,” I answered. “Three thousand pesos in bills — almost half of all I have in the world. I try not to think of that! Before we left Cuernavaca I placed these bills in a little suède bag, and Mrs. Mestrezat, my manager, wore this bag tied about her

waist on our journey. When she was wounded so terribly in San Francisco, they had to cut off her blood-soaked clothes and put a soldier's shirt on her, and in this way the little suède bag was lost."

"If you were to see that bag again," said the dentist, watching me closely, "would you know it, Mrs. King?"

"Of course!" I said, startled.

He went to his safe and, opening it, took out a sorry-looking object. Bloodstained and water-stiffened, it was still the little suède bag that Mrs. Mestrezat had worn.

I took it curiously when he handed it to me, and more from habit than anything else I loosened the drawstring. Incredibly, I felt inside the springy bulk of a roll of currency. I drew out the banknotes with shaking fingers and counted them. Not a cent was missing. I could not say a word.

"No one will ever quite believe this when you tell it, Mrs. King," the dentist was saying, "but once in a while such things happen."

He told me how, one evening at dusk, as he was closing and locking his office, a man had stepped into the doorway beside him. The fellow was wearing the uniform of the *Juanes* — the common soldiers, "Johns" as they call them. He had appeared so suddenly and silently and his general aspect was so rough-looking that for a moment the dentist thought he meant to rob or attack him. Instead, he had thrust the bag into the American's hand, saying

brusquely, "*Es de la extranjera* — it belongs to the foreign lady who came with us from Cuernavaca. Give it to her." With that he had turned and vanished down the street, and the dentist had unlocked the door again and gone inside to see what the object was.

I made every effort to find the man who had returned my money and reward him. His splendid gesture was the more touching because I knew that the troops to whom he had belonged had not been paid for months and were in need of everything that money could buy. Chacón and the American dentist did all they could to help in the search, but we were never able to find the man. He seemed to have disappeared, swallowed up in the obscure ranks of the *Juanes*. To this day it troubles me that I was not able to make some tangible recognition of his rare and unassuming honesty.

I paid a last visit to the dentist, just before I left Toluca, to urge him to continue his efforts. He said, to lighten my distress, "Men do not do things like this for rewards or gratitude, Mrs. King. They do them to satisfy something in themselves. If it had been thirty pesos, perhaps he would have used it."

He walked restlessly over to the long window and stood there, hands clasped behind his back, looking out over the plaza where soldiers were lounging in twos and threes. "These are abnormal times, Mrs. King," he said, an undercurrent of excitement in his voice. "It goes deeper than the uniforms. Safety

and security have been knocked into a cocked hat, and now that it 's no good anyway we can see what a flat thing our precious cautiousness was. When you come right down to it, we 've given up a lot for the sake of being civilized!"

"And war," I said with some bitterness, "is a kind of a spree. What a relief it is for you men to cast off responsibilities!"

I remember that he swung around, then, and faced me; but his eyes were looking past me, to the trenches of France, I think. He said, "You mean, war is too high a price to pay. Of course! No one ever starts a war; it 's always the other fellow. But once war 's begun . . . It 's a fine, heady thing for a man to taste his own nature. We humans are capable of more horrible things than we like to believe; you have seen that, Mrs. King. But we are also capable of more beautiful actions than one might expect."

I said softly, "I have seen that, too."

The three thousand pesos were a godsend to me. Added to the five thousand pesos I had sewed into my riding habit, they made up a sum large enough to tide me over the immediate future, and the doctor and my people in Mexico City forbade me to think any further.

At the outbreak of the Revolution I had been fairly well-to-do, but all the money I had made in Cuernavaca I had reinvested in that town. When the political troubles began and tourists ceased to visit Cuernavaca, my tearoom business had rapidly

dwindled to nothing. The pottery factory had not lasted much longer; although the Zapatistas spared it when they were in possession of the town in 1911, the Federals had sacked it a little later. Now I had been obliged to abandon my largest investment, the Hotel Bella Vista. No definite word had reached us in Toluca as to what had happened in Cuernavaca after we left. No one had been so foolish as to go back to see, and we could only conjecture what the Zapatistas had done when they entered the town. Shortly after I reached Mexico City, a messenger arrived from Cuernavaca who confirmed my worst fears. He told us that the Zapatistas had completely sacked the beautiful little place and in three days reduced it to ruins.

A bitter chapter in my life was reopened when I found waiting for me in Mexico City letters from Helene Pontipirani, the spy who had betrayed me and the town I loved. She had not been killed as we thought, but had got off scot-free. She wrote to beg my pardon for what she had done. I was still too ill in mind and body from the wounds I had received and from remembrance of horrors to feel any active hatred or even anger; but I shrank from answering her letters as one might shudder away from a snake.

In spite of the devotion of my daughter and the kindness of my relatives and friends, I found Mexico City in the months that followed hardly the place for an invalid. Unrest was in the air.

Huerta had been driven out of the capital and the presidential hat was, as it were, in the ring. For the time being Don Venustiano Carranza was in possession of the city. He had been declared commander in chief of all the military forces, but how much this title meant, no one could say. It seemed unlikely that all the troops by now in arms would obey him. The Revolution was no longer a concerted movement, if it had ever been so. Mexico was torn by factions, all in name at least "Revolutionary" and all more or less antagonistic to each other. I thought, Men seeking liberty are like men seeking God; they are all sure that everyone else's way is wrong.

Don Venustiano Carranza was a man of commanding appearance, well educated and of Spanish descent. How innately generous or disinterested he was is perhaps a verdict for future historians to render, but I can testify that the white flag of the *avant-courrier* from the Carranzista forces, as he approached our battle-worn general and the pitiable remnant of our army at Tenango, was as a banner from the bulwarks of Heaven.

At this time Don Venustiano had at his side Pancho Villa, the picturesque ruffian from the north, in whose service Helene Pontipirani had betrayed Cuernavaca and me. Much has been said to whitewash Villa, but in the part of the country where I live he is called, by common consent, murderer and bandit. To the people of Morelos, which he ravaged

later, Villa personifies the worst side of the Revolution, as does Zapata the best. Zapata wanted for his people only the land itself, which was rightfully their own, so that they might work out their salvation; and he never swerved from that goal. But Villa lost himself in the red mists of hatred. At the age of fourteen he had killed his first man, to avenge a scoundrel's outrage of his sister's honor. It was as though all his career were colored by a feeling of reprisal against the world for the bad start he and his fellows had got in life. Wherever he marched he conquered in these days, and wherever he conquered followed death and destruction, plunder and rapine—all the crimes and excesses that war makes palatable to those who commit them.

In after years, when I could think calmly about her, I often wondered why, of all the Revolutionary leaders, it had been Pancho Villa who won the allegiance of Helene Pontipirani. Stories of her escapades in other lands have drifted to my ears, but I am sure that she was not a spy for merely mercenary reasons. I think there must have been something overbred and decadent in her, that was fascinated by brutal, primitive strength.

One day my brother-in-law said to me, "Well, Rosa, your old friend General Felipe Angeles has come back to Mexico, just as you predicted he would; and is in the thick of things again."

"Poor Mrs. Angeles!" I thought, for I knew how she must be suffering, with her husband once more

in constant danger. I had not seen her since that day, more than two years before, when I had found her in hiding with her husband, after the assassination of Madero.

I tried to find out whether she had returned with the general, and where I might reach her, but no one seemed to know. As it turned out, I was not even able to see the general, for matters were reaching a climax in the capital.

General Carranza found that in Villa he had an ally not easily managed. There were disagreements and hostilities between them, and to my surprise my gentle and noble friend, Felipe Angeles, ranged himself on the side of Villa. Why he did this I could never understand, unless it was that he recognized in Villa a rare degree of force and leadership, and hoped to turn the tremendous energies of the man to more worthy ends. Villa, indeed, must have been made better by the contact, for once, in speaking of Angeles, he said, "He taught me there was such a thing as mercy."

At last came the open break we had all been expecting. There was an entire split in the ranks, Villa and his adherents declaring themselves against Carranza and his party.

This was ominous news to us foreigners as well as to the Mexicans. Mexico City, the capital, was bound to become a bone of contention between the two leaders. My friends, fortified by their inexperience of the horrors war could unleash, were able to

maintain a certain calm. But in my mind there was too clear a picture of what might follow this break; and no reasoned arguments could rid me of the fear that took possession of my weakened spirit.

Just at this time the owner of the Hotel France in Orizaba, a gentleman I had known for years, asked me if I would take charge of his hotel for him. I was charmed with the prospect of getting away from Mexico City, and pleased with the idea of taking over the Francia. I had a sister living in Orizaba and I knew and liked the town. The idea of being on my own again and handling business affairs was like meat and drink to me; I was tired of being an invalid.

Vera and I packed our things as quickly as we could and went to Orizaba.



CHAPTER XIX

ORIZABA is a lovely tranquil town midway on the steep descent from the high plateau, where Mexico City lies, to the narrow strip of coast and the port of Vera Cruz. In Orizaba, the luxuriant tropical foliage of the lower slope meets and mingles with the hardy shrubs that grow higher up. The Hotel France, like my Bella Vista, had formerly been a great mansion, and the massive gates and stately stone staircase remained. The great patio was full of flowering vines and tall palm trees, for Orizaba is noted for its lovely patios and rambling gardens. The mellow old houses, the deep ravines that slashed about the edges of the town, the circling mountains topped by the snowy cone of the volcano Orizaba — with a twinge of homesickness I realized that the quality of the place was hauntingly like the charm of my own town in the peaceful days before the Revolution. Since I was cut off from Cuernavaca, I was like an exile forever seeing in strange places a touch of home.

This precious peace did not last long. Orizaba was soon bristling with Carranzista soldiers and the Hotel France was filled with the tramp of officers' boots and the jingle of spurs. The commander for the district, whom we will call General Lopez,—which was not his name,—established himself in the bridal suite. Everywhere were noise and gayety; and Vera and I discreetly kept to our rooms a great deal of the time.

Until I saw the effect she had on the *militares*, I had not realized how very pretty Vera was becoming. She was at the age where I thought her still a child and she thought herself almost a young lady. Her shy blonde beauty had the added charm of rarity in that land of brunettes, and she was beginning to notice how the men looked after her when she walked with me.

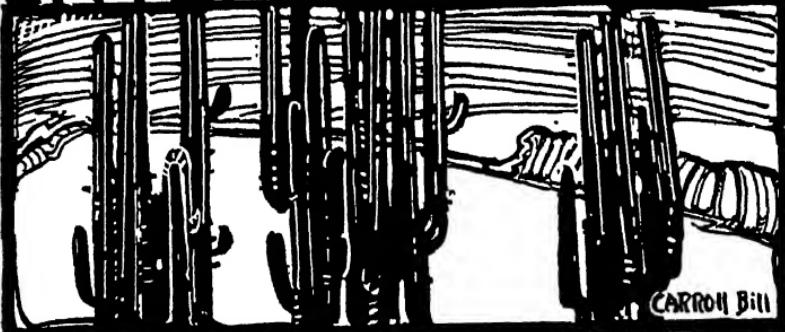
“Remember,” I told her firmly, “you are not to go downstairs alone.” There were entirely too many handsome young lieutenants in General Lopez’s command. I wanted no infantile romances added to my other problems!

But it never occurred to me that there was any need to be concerned for my daughter until one day, when she was teasing the parakeet in the patio, I happened to look up and saw the commander, General Lopez, standing on the balcony watching her.

Without saying anything to Vera, I quietly manœuvred to keep her out of the general’s way. This was not difficult; simply a matter of keeping her in



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our own rooms and seeing that she went often to my sister's or to the houses of old friends in Orizaba. My sister had a daughter who was about Vera's age, and Vera was always glad to be with Margaret and with another particularly dear friend, the daughter of our physician. She suspected nothing.

I had made a point of avoiding conversation with the military men, who were all complete strangers to us, and if General Lopez noticed my daughter's continual absences he had no opening to inquire about her. He did not lack for feminine society, and after a few days I concluded that his interest in Vera had been only a passing flash and that he had already forgotten her.

One afternoon Vera came home in great distress. "The soldiers have taken Katie's pony and her father's horse!" Katie was the physician's daughter. "Her father really needs the horse and Katie will be heart-broken if she does n't have her pony. He does everything she tells him to. She asked me if I would try to get them back for her. Do you think it would be all right for me to speak to General Lopez about it?"

I knew a young girl could not speak to one of the *militares* alone; but I promised her, after a moment's hesitation, that we would both speak to General Lopez. Katie was not only Vera's friend; her father was an old friend of my dead husband. For friendship's sake, I thought, we could take a little risk.

That evening, when the general entered the drawing-room where I was sitting with my daughter, I spoke to him. To my surprise he answered in perfect English. My amazement pleased and flattered him, and he told us that he had been educated at the University of California at Berkeley. He went on talking easily and well, and as he spoke I studied him. He was a large and powerful man, rather dark, and fascinating in a way. Underneath his courtly manners and princely bearing there was a hint of something elemental that his American culture had not reached. He was not a man to be taken lightly.

When Vera told him about the horses, he offered at once to do all he could to recover them and return them to our friends. He added gallantly, "To such a fair pleader, nothing could be denied."

This remark, and the way he said it, did not please me in the least. I was more than ever convinced that Vera and I must keep to strict retirement in our rooms.

Later that evening, while we were at *cena*, the late supper, he came over to our table and told us that he had given orders about the physician's horses. We thanked him, but still he lingered.

He said, "I have horses which are at your disposal for riding at any time, Mrs. King —" and added with a knowing look, "not stolen horses, either."

I did not like his manner. I got up and left the room, with Vera following close behind me.

The general felt definitely snubbed. Our friends'

horses were never returned to them. But I do not think they would have got them back in any case.

A few nights later the full military band assembled under our windows and serenaded Vera. I was thoroughly annoyed, and a little troubled. After all, it might well go to a young girl's head to have a general serenading her. I asked Vera what she thought of General Lopez.

To my relief, she answered promptly, "I don't like him. I wish he'd go away from here."

Any woman out of her teens would have felt General Lopez's attraction, but my daughter was still a child, accustomed to the gentle surroundings of her boarding school in Tennessee, conducted by women of the greatest refinement. She was afraid of General Lopez without understanding why.

One afternoon as I was having tea with my sister, a prominent man of the town hurriedly entered her drawing-room. "I have something very urgent to say to you, Mrs. King," he said to me.

I thought at first it was something relating to one of his large *haciendas*, for at that time many wealthy Mexicans put their houses and lands into the hands of foreigners and in this way saved them from confiscation. I said, "Certainly, Don Juan, I will be glad to help you in any way possible."

But it appeared that Don Juan Gutierrez had come to help me. He began by apologizing profusely, regretting that he had to trouble me. I was astonished and began to wonder what was coming. To my hor-

ror, he told me that General Lopez sent him with word that he intended to marry my daughter the next evening. General Lopez had also stated, advancing his qualifications as a bridegroom, that he was very rich — which was quite true; that he was a Baptist, which was not true; and, funnier still to any who knew his reputation, that he was unmarried!

My indignation was unbounded. I wanted to send back a reply that he should never have my daughter, but Don Juan wisely counseled me not to do so. A man high in power could not be refused in that way. I sent, instead, the polite message that foreigners never permitted their daughters to marry so young, and that my daughter must still go to school for two years; that she had only come from Tennessee to Mexico for the holidays and had not returned because railroad communication between Mexico City and the border had been almost destroyed, and it was too dangerous for anyone to travel; and that when her education was completed, the question of her marriage could be considered. I thought that would end the matter.

Imagine, then, my consternation when I was told shortly after that General Lopez was getting ready a train to carry off my daughter! I sent at once for our British Vice-Consul. He came immediately, accompanied by a delightful American, Mr. Finney, from Boston I believe, who had been a coffee buyer in those parts for years. Mr. Finney's indignation

was wonderful to see, and I only wish that I could have taken a snapshot of him as he hopped about that room in a rage to think that any man would try to steal my daughter. "Damn his impudence!" he said, like someone in a play. The consul merely walked the floor and muttered over and over again, "But this is an outrage!" That was as far as his British phlegm would let him go. He wanted to take my daughter at once to Vera Cruz under his official protection and put her in charge of the British Consul there. This scheme was not workable, however. General Lopez had snapped his fingers, as it were, at the wrath of the British government in even thinking of carrying off my daughter. He had power to stop anything and everything on the railroad in that part of the country. We thought of appealing to his superiors, but that was impossible. General Carranza himself was in Mexico City, and General Obregón over near Puebla. That was why General Lopez dared to attempt such an action!

Our only chance was to hide her away.

That night, after dark, she was slipped out of the hotel and taken to my sister's home. She did not want to go at first. "I don't know what is the matter with everybody," she said, in a tone of vexation. "Auntie Lina has been upset for days and wanting to take me away from you, and now you are simply pushing me off on her." I had to tell her then what General Lopez intended. From my sister's home she was smuggled to a large tobacco factory owned by

foreigners — a very good hiding place, as there were innumerable underground passages where she could be hidden and never found in case search was made.

She was hidden there four days. All this while I pretended that she was indisposed and could not leave her room. General Lopez made solicitous inquiries every day about her health and sent her baskets of the choicest fruits. Of course, he knew perfectly well that she was not ill, and not in her room; and was carrying on a quiet but determined search for her in the town.

The fifth day, I heard with joy that General Obregón had sent orders to General Lopez to proceed at once with his troops to Puebla to fight the Zapatistas.

Although I felt my troubles were now over, I did not wish to risk the chance of General Lopez returning to Orizaba. I abandoned the management of the Hotel France and hurried down to Vera Cruz with my daughter — and my niece, to keep her company. An English friend lent us his apartment, which was situated just across the street from the British Consul's. In Vera Cruz I subsequently received messages from General Lopez, relayed through an American doctor who came sometimes to the city, congratulating me on the success of my stratagem. He intimated that he would come in person to deliver his felicitations, if and when he reached Vera Cruz. Fortunately he and his troops never entered the city while the girls and I were there.

While still in Orizaba we had heard that Don Venustiano Carranza, as commander in chief of the Constitutional armies, had transferred himself to the presidency of the nation. This action had not been very cordially received by the other military chiefs assembled at the time in Mexico City, and Don Venustiano Carranza decided to abandon Mexico City and to declare Vera Cruz the capital of the republic. To our dismay, President Carranza arrived in Vera Cruz soon after we did, with his ministers of state, generals and soldiers, and all the riff-raff, in countless numbers, that followed the army.

I was once more in an extremely nervous condition. The shock of the incident with General Lopez had undone all the good effects of my first peaceful weeks in Orizaba, and I jumped at every unexpected sound. I would have left at once, with the girls, for Mexico City if that had been possible. But the Carranzistas had destroyed the railroad behind them as they came, in order that Mexico City might suffer from lack of the food ordinarily shipped up from the coast. Luckily for us, this situation proved to have its redeeming features. If we could not go to Mexico City, neither could the Carranzistas' enemies come down to attack Vera Cruz. While the various factions were creating disorder in Mexico City by their disputes, Carranza ruled quite peacefully in our seaport. The girls and I, in driving and walking about the town, often saw Don Venustiano, and he always bowed graciously and gave us a pleasant

smile and a few friendly words. He was a striking figure on horseback.

In time I became accustomed to the sight of his troops, stalwart fellows from the north, mingling in the streets with the darker, slenderer men of the tropics; even to the sight of the women soldiers. I remember one particularly, a fine-looking woman, Colonel Carrasco. They said she led her women troops like a man, or an Amazon, and herself shot down, in approved military fashion, any who faltered or disobeyed in battle. An American pointed out to me General Alvaro Obregón, who had so providentially called General Lopez away from Orizaba. "If I am not mistaken," he said, "that young man will be one of the great men of Mexico." Even in those years General Obregón was distinguished for his fearlessness and brilliant gifts of leadership, and for his integrity. His men would follow him anywhere, and it was known that he did not take part in the wholesale stealing practised by many of the military men.

From time to time we heard news of the disorder and depredations in Mexico City. Mr. Clifford, the British friend who had lent me his apartment, was king's messenger on the railroad, and by virtue of his office was able to pass safely back and forth between Mexico City and Vera Cruz. He told us that Villa had taken Mexico City and might have been made president if the people had not feared a man so relentless. Later he told us that Zapata had

entered the city and that he and his followers had been a source of wonder to the disillusioned citizens. When they were hungry they asked for *tortillas*, the coarse corn cakes to which they were accustomed. The people laughed at them for fools, being satisfied with such plain fare when all the luxurious viands of a great city were theirs for the taking. Knowing the native keenness of these hardy mountaineers, I was sure that they must have laughed in their turn at the soft city folk who could not understand anything outside their own way of doing things.

One of the Zapatistas had stopped Mr. Clifford on the street.

"I had no idea what he wanted," our friend related with a grin, "but I knew I was n't going to argue. His rifle was in his hand, two cartridge belts were around his waist, and two more crossed each other over his back and chest; and as for knives — well, they were glistening wherever they could be anchored on his person!" The Britisher thought he was about to be apprehended on suspicion, or at least asked for a cash donation, but instead, with a friendly gesture, the man had asked him for a cigarette and match.

I listened eagerly to everything our friend had to say about the Zapatistas. These were, for the most part, men from my own state. Many of them I must have seen in the old days, in 1911 when Zapata held Cuernavaca, or even earlier, before the troubles began. Some, doubtless, I knew by name. And

though I had been driven from my home by the Zapatistas, I was glad when he said that Zapata had made a tremendous impression on all by his sincerity and selflessness. For I still remembered the Man of Morelos, silent upon his horse, the day we had waited together for the coming of Mr. Madero.

Mr. Clifford said that tremendous sums of money passed through Zapata's hands, but he kept none of it for himself; and this was very rare in those days when the temptations that faced the generals were so great that few could withstand them. The enormous wealth of the rich people who had fled from the country was considered forfeited, but there was no strong central government to which all the generals felt accountable, and which could systematically administer for the public good the funds they confiscated. It is not surprising that amid the confusion many were demoralized by the opportunities to advance their personal fortunes. But Zapata wanted nothing for himself, and for his people only land and the liberty to work it in peace. He had seen the evil the love of money had wrought in the upper classes.

Hearing these tales of discord in Mexico City, I was glad enough to be in Vera Cruz. Among the train who had come to the coast with Carranza was my dear friend Federico Chacón. We had a joyous reunion with him, and there was a great exchange of adventures that had befallen us since we were last together. Federico was in his usual good spirits and

swores, when I asked him, that he enjoyed the entire confidence of the Carranzistas. I found out later, from other sources, that this was not entirely true, and that he said it merely to keep me from worrying; but at the time I believed it and it made me very happy.

How he laughed and teased me when I started and fell into a tremble at a sudden sharp sound outside, like the report of a revolver!

"Aha, you must have a guilty conscience, Mother — to jump at the popping of a *nux vomica* pod, that falls from a tree in your own garden!"

The thing that aggravated me about these seizures was that I really was not afraid in the ordinary sense. I had perfect confidence in the Carranzistas, in the proximity of the British Consul and of the American warships that lay in the harbor, and now I even had Chacón, my own particular hero, within call. I was afraid of things that were all over, that had happened a year ago. Any shock seemed to have power to evoke horrible recollections of my flight from Cuernavaca, which I had long ago forgotten, or even had not consciously noted at the time. The worst times were at night when the pain in my back was stronger than usual and I could not sleep. Then whole incidents which had been a merciful blur at the time would unroll before me with excruciating clarity — like a strip of film, run in slow-motion.

I threw myself as much as possible into the gay social life of Vera Cruz. There were a number of

English and American civilians in town, and we quickly became friends with Admiral Kepperton and the officers on the American ships. There were parties and dances and picnics on the beach. Vera and Margaret were having the time of their lives, and I enjoyed their pleasure. I liked to bathe in the warm surf, and found the constant roll of the sea, never far away in Vera Cruz, curiously soothing to my nerves. Stillness would have been unbearable in my tense condition, but in the rush and break of the sea there was a rhythm that seemed to smooth out the kinks.

And then Chacón got into trouble.

During the time General Robles had been in command in Cuernavaca, Chacón had held the important and confidential post of chief of police. For some reason the Carranzistas had an interest in what had happened at that period; and some of the Carranzista officers had dropped veiled hints to me that Chacón was skating on thin ice. These extremely delicate hints had gone over my head at the time they were uttered, but they suddenly crystallized in my mind when a strange man approached Vera and me one afternoon and asked if we could tell him where to find the captain.

We were walking in the plaza, the garden in the centre of the town, when he stopped us. The request was innocent enough, but it struck me as odd that the man should come to me to learn the captain's whereabouts instead of going to his fellow officers.

And then I realized that he must be one of the numerous private detectives, or spies, who were in the town, and that he had come to me because he thought I was a gullible woman, who would not suspect his intentions!

I told him civilly that at the moment I did not know where the captain was, but would try to find out for him. If he would call at my apartment that evening, I might be able to tell him.

Vera and I went home quickly. Our Indian cook was a woman who had been with me for years in Cuernavaca, and I trusted her implicitly. I sent her out at once to find Chacón, telling her not to return without him. He was not at his lodgings, but she finally found him watching a cockfight in an alley. When he heard what had passed between the detective and me, he admitted that his situation was as grave as I feared, and asked me to hide him somewhere.

I had anticipated this. All the while we waited for him I had been trying to plan what to do. We were living in an apartment building that suddenly seemed all windows and doors. The only possible place where anyone could be hidden was an old room with no windows at all, which was used for a charcoal cellar. Into this dark and terrible place Federico descended, bracing himself with an unconscious shake of the shoulders, like a man about to plunge into icy water.

He was no more than safely hidden when the de-

tective arrived. I told him that Chacón had gone out of the city for two or three days, but if he called on me when he returned, I would ask him to look up the man who was seeking him and find out what he wanted. I do not know if the detective suspected me of knowing more than I told, but he came nearly every day to inquire if I had heard anything of Chacón's return. He never came inside the house, but remained respectfully outside, asking his questions and receiving his answers through the grilled windows of my first-floor apartment. I was a foreigner and he knew he was treading on delicate ground. But he maintained a quiet surveillance of our house. From day to day I held him off. It never occurred to me that I was telling lies, nor would I have cared if it had, remembering Him Who said, "If a sheep fall into a pit, will ye not take it out on the Sabbath Day?" Set aside the Sabbath for a sheep! He would forgive me that I set aside the truth for a life. I had but one thought, and that was to save that brave young life with all its noble impulses and loyal friendship.

Meanwhile, Federico's position was desperate. He was penned up in dark and fearful heat. Dust had accumulated for years in the charcoal catacomb and I was afraid he might smother to death. The days stretched into weeks and still he dared not come out for a breath of air, as in our apartment there were neighbors all about us. The least occurrence out of the ordinary would rouse suspicion in them that we

foreigners were hiding a young Mexican — perhaps an enemy of the government then in power in Vera Cruz. Federico was in the hole a month, and never once did the poor fellow utter a complaint. He knew we three women were doing all in our power to help him. I racked my brains for a scheme to get him safely out of the city. I understood not only the constant danger of discovery, which would mean forthright shooting or hanging for poor Federico, but also the terrible effect of the confinement itself on one of his active, open nature.

At last I found a way. Mr. Clifford was, as I have already said, permitted to pass freely in and out of Vera Cruz. When I told him my tale of woe, he at once called the British Consul into conference. "No matter what happens," I told them, "Chacón must be saved!"

"Of course he must," said Mr. Clifford stoutly, knowing how many times I owed my life to Federico. The two of them decided that the captain should make his escape carrying the bags of mail on the road to Mexico City.

Poor Chacón! The day he returned to the light he looked like a stoker on a transatlantic liner or a vaudeville actor blackened to look like a negro. What a joy it was to him to be once more in the free air! He had a good bath — or rather, several — and disguised himself in the white *calzones* and sandals Mr. Clifford had provided. To us who had known him only as the captain, in faultless military

dress, giving orders to his men, his appearance as a *mozo*, carrying bags of mail, would have been comical if the emergency had not been so desperate. I hoped he would not forget his rôle.

He seemed to take the disguise as a great joke and beamed his irrepressible smile as he embraced me and said good-bye. He left with Mr. Clifford. What a relief to me! No one can imagine how I felt but those who have gone through such a season of suspense. The following day, when the private detective came to call on me, he was disgusted to learn that I had had word that Chacón was in Puebla. Of course they never found him there; he had gone to Mexico City. A few days later I had a letter from him assuring me of his safe arrival.

I fully expected that this second nerve-racking incident would be followed by the same sort of relapse I had experienced after Vera's troubles with General Lopez. To my surprise, I felt no such ill effects. On the contrary, I felt more like my old self than I had for a long time. The protracted encounter of wits with the detective, in which I had come off best, restored my confidence in my coolness and resourcefulness. I said to myself, "Vera and Margaret have been babying me too much. Until I was hurt I always led an active, constructive life. No wonder memories prey on me when my daily life has no purpose." I began to cast about for some enterprise in which I could use my abilities and regain mental as well as financial independence. The mem-

ories of what I had suffered and seen no longer crowded so strongly into my waking hours; but sometimes they obtruded into my dreams. I had one recurrent nightmare in which I stood impotently by, screaming, while the Zapatistas knocked down my Hotel Bella Vista and methodically piled up the stones to form a pyramid.

"It can't be as bad as that," I told myself, irritated. I had seen towns that had been sacked. I knew there must be something left — perhaps enough to salvage and rebuild. . . . "That's it," I thought, in a flash. "If I could see the Bella Vista again, the reality would dispel these horrible fancies. If I could rebuild it, salvage something from the wreck, I would lose this sense of futility. . . ."

And from that time on the determination grew in me to revisit Cuernavaca.



CHAPTER XX

NONSENSE, Mrs. King! Whatever are you thinking of!"

It was the British Minister, Sir Thomas Hohler, speaking. I had just told him of my intention to run down to Cuernavaca and see for myself what had happened there. I can see and hear him to-day as he jumped up, horrified. "I do not approve at all of your going—and perhaps making any amount of trouble for our government!"

"Well," I said, "that is at least a new angle of objection." My family and friends had been trying to dissuade me from the trip on the ground of my ill-health and the likelihood of nervous shock.

"You are taking entirely too much for granted," went on Sir Thomas, ruffled out of his usual diplomatic serenity. "It is true that the Federals have driven the Zapatistas out of Cuernavaca and are once more in possession of the town, but that does n't mean a great deal. The Zapatistas are making constant trouble for the Federals all through the district—

and you talk of 'running down to see what has happened.' Really, I can't allow it."

I told him frankly that I should have to go in any case. Vera and I must find some means of keeping alive, and the only chance of bettering our desperate financial situation was to return to Cuernavaca and try to recover something of what I had lost there. In the end, all I promised was that I would not take Vera with me when I went. Sir Thomas's parting shot was, "All right, go if you are so determined; but remember I will let you get out of trouble as best you can, yourself."

That made me rather laugh, for I knew how good he was, and that if anything did happen to me on my trip, he would do everything in his power to save me from the consequences of my "folly." He was a man whom we should call in Spanish "*muy simpático*" (very sympathetic). He knew how to meet the difficult state of affairs the Revolution had created; and not only his cleverness, but the tact and delightful manner that went with it, helped all Britishers through this trying period.

And so, in 1916, two years after I had been driven out, I returned to Cuernavaca.

Every time the train jerked and stopped suddenly my heart beat violently and I feared that we were about to be attacked. The train toiled up the mountain barrier, and we left behind the hazy Valley of Mexico with its ravaged villages and wasted fields and crawled across the level highlands. Here noth-

ing was changed. It was a region of few dwellings, of thin cold air and waste lands, and of remote upland meadows where the cloud mists curled like smoke. Everything was as it had always been. I knew what lay beyond every curve, and I waited for a twisted rock and the tang of pine woods. I was going home! After two years of wandering, I was going home to pick up the pieces and see what I could make of them.

I had learned a lot in the past two years. I was no longer the woman who, because she was a foreigner, thought this was not her Revolution. I had come to know the records of this country, to link them with what I myself had seen and experienced; to understand that the Revolution was a profound and necessary upheaval — and I was part of it. The Revolution had cost me all I prized — true. But I, who had come to the town a stranger, had shared richly in the welfare of Cuernavaca. In the light of that understanding, I must without bitterness accept my share of the town's woe. Let the bankers in London and New York sigh for their losses in Cuernavaca, and write them off. I lived there. Mine was the citizen's job of rebuilding.

I had been planning for months how to meet this problem. First, I must make my own estimate of the damages done to the Bella Vista; then find backing to make the needed repairs. Some alterations I had long been wishing to make in the service wing could be handled at the same time. I knew exactly to

whom I should go to borrow the money. . . . The train was edging along at a snail's pace, in case the track should be torn up ahead, and the trip seemed interminable. It seemed to me I could not wait to put my plans into practice.

We passed the dismal sheds of Tres Marias; a little farther and we were over the crest of the mountains, and below us lay Morelos! All the while we were winding down the steep, wooded slope, my eyes were feeding on the widening glimpses of the valley, straining to focus more distinctly the white patch that was Cuernavaca, which appeared and disappeared as we looped about the mountains.

Recollections surged over me with the force almost of physical sensations: again I breathed the indescribable pungency that emanates from a Mexican countryside and is like nothing I have smelted elsewhere in the world, and felt the warmth of the sunshine that floods the gleaming plaster walls and purple bougainvillea spilling over from the gardens inside. I could close my eyes and bask in the homely street life of the South: the trains of plodding burros and the endless stream of passers-by; the loungers in the shady Zócalo listening to the tinkle of a *marimba* band; and the young blades in their finery, courting their sweethearts through the barred windows—"playing the bear," they call it. I remembered the women, with their market baskets, kneeling to pray at a shrine as they passed; the mellow ring of ancient church bells, and the constant, companionable under-

tone of bare feet padding by; the low-pitched murmur of Indian voices, and the soft slap-slap of women's hands shaping the *tortillas* for the noonday meal. . . . And then, in the intensity of the feeling that welled up in me, these flooding recollections fused and mingled with my dreams of the future, until all was indistinct; but the taste of Cuernavaca was in my mouth like fiery, perfumed wine, so that through a golden haze I heard laughter sounding in the Bella Vista, and saw the shining hissing trail of rockets sent up in the plaza to celebrate a feast day.

And suddenly it seemed to me a proud sweet task to work shoulder to shoulder with my neighbors to re-create the town we loved.

Late in the afternoon the train reached Cuernavaca. What a sight to greet us! Black, battered, bullet-pierced walls where had been comfortable, happy homes; bridges destroyed, approaches to the town cut off; everywhere signs of the dreadful conflict that had taken place. . . . My head had known that it would be like this, but my heart was not prepared. We drove down the silent streets past abandoned, deserted houses; not a soul in sight. A dog, nosing in a heap of rubbish, slunk away at our approach, and the clatter of the wheels awoke strange echoes in the emptiness. In the heart of town a handful of people were living, and I saw the soldiers, their uniforms marking them as strangers. Some of my servants had clung to the Bella Vista, and I found them waiting for me in the ruin of the *portal*.



TORTILLERAS



Old Natividad rushed to me and put her arms around me. I clung to her, the tears streaming down my face. I was sobbing, "But there is no one here! Where are the people? Where are the people?"

It did not take long to go over what was left of my hotel. The great dining room that had been my pride was bare — nothing left in it; only pigs and chickens living there together quite happily. The rest of the house was wrecked and ruined in the same degree. The room where President Madero had slept was entirely burned out and open to the sky, with no part of the roof remaining — only blackened walls, to tell the story of a piece of wicked spite against a little man long dead.

The one thing that brought warmth to my heart was the faces of my servants and their joy in seeing me. Pilar, the boy who had hidden the fine wines the night our column of refugees left town, told me that the Zapatistas had found them in spite of all his precautions; and that, when they tasted them, they would have none of them. "Take that stuff away," they had ordered in disgust. "You can have it. But bring us *alcohol!*!" They preferred *tequila*, *mezcal*, and the other raw-fire drinks to which they were accustomed.

Pilar said the rebels had rushed in screaming, "Where is the *señora*? We want her dead or alive." He was grinning all over as he told how he had answered them: "My *señora* (madame) is traveling

on the road to Mexico." For his pride in the fact that he worked for me, the Zapatistas put a rope around his neck, and he was on the verge of being hanged, but the prayers and tears of his mother saved him.

Natividad brought me a frugal supper of *frijoles* (beans) and eggs and little plums. The *ciruela* trees were still bearing, and that seemed a marvelous thing to me who had seen the wasted fields all through the region quickly returning to wilderness once the cultivation of man was withheld.

I sat in a sheltered corner with a shawl about my shoulders, to ward off the chill of the evening, and a tallow candle burning beside me. The flame made the shadows darker beyond, blotting out the ruin, so that all I could see was the circle of light just around me and the distant brilliance of the stars. I had meant to go that evening to see General Pablo González, who commanded the Federal forces in the town, but I could not bring myself to make the effort. I tried to draw out the servants and learn what was passing in the district. Gradually their reserve and evasiveness wore away, and they spoke more frankly. They seemed to have little faith in President Carranza's commander, General Pablo González. "That one!" they said, with an expressive shrug of the shoulders. The Federals, they said, were no better than the Zapatistas when they held someone else's town; indeed, not so good, for were they not entire strangers, from another state? The *jefe* — Zapata

— was, after all, *morelense!* . . . How strong, I thought, is the regional pride in these people, the bond of familiarity and race. My servants were not Zapatistas; they had thrown in their lot with the people of the towns, and their homes had been sacked by the Zapatistas; yet they would not have lifted a finger to help the Federals in their campaign. Their apathy baffled me. “Oh, Natividad,” I burst out, “how can you stand like that, doing nothing, when our homes are in ruins? Don’t you care what becomes of you?”

Natividad’s old eyes were patient with me as she answered very gently, “There is something to eat for to-day, and my head is tight on my shoulders; what more may one expect, *niña*?”

“*Niña*,” she called me, “child”—a word used freely among these people in endearment; but as Natividad said it, I felt its meaning. I saw myself, in the face of these quiet Indians, a child out alone after dark. It was not the past six years of civil war, in whose painful uncertainties I had learned so much, which had taught these people to live in the moment. Centuries loomed behind Natividad’s words: she spoke out of the wisdom of an old race that lived in a valley all men coveted, who had suffered again and again the onslaught of invasion.

I asked them about Zapata, and then, for the first time, I felt an eagerness, a kind of expectation stirring behind their guarded words. Little by little they brought out the tales of Zapata’s prowess in battle, of his terrible just anger, and his goodness to the weak;

the mercy he had shown to the spy woman, the beautiful Emilia, because she was a woman, though "that one" — our Federal commander — had set her on the Zapatistas to lead them into a death trap. And all the while it seemed to me that we were getting further away from our own affairs, from the condition that faced us in Cuernavaca. They used the same words I did, — "Revolution, Zapata, government," — but it seemed to me they meant something different by them. I remember old Pepe's wrinkled face, creased with silent laughter, as she spoke of the snares laid by our general to trap the cunning fox, Zapata — "as though the *jefe* were to be caught with snares like a common man, or killed by a bullet like anyone else!"

I told them, in my turn, what I had heard in Mexico City, that there was no leader in Mexico so popular as Zapata, since all men knew that he fought not for his own gain, but only "that there might be the same laws for the poor man as for the rich"; and that when he was in the capital the people would have made him president, but he would not let them, saying he was not the man for the place.

"*Cómo no,*" they nodded gravely. Their shrewdness told them that no man could walk wisely among matters he did not understand, and it was for this that they despised the Federal generals sent out to them. It was, I sensed, the essence of their trust in Zapata that he stayed close to the soil of his *tierra*, whose needs were part of him; eschewing honors and wealth,

and sleeping always away from the towns, in a hidden place that no man knew; like a holy person dedicated to the service of his people, perhaps.

And then I caught the rhythm of their feeling, and understood that to them *la revolución* was infinitely more than the Revolution of 1910. It was the long continuous movement of resistance, like a rolling wave, that had swelled against Cortez and his conquistadores, and the greedy Aztec war lords before them; that had engulfed the armies of Spain and the armies of France as it now engulfed the *hacendados*. It was the struggle of these people for a birthright, to develop in their own way, in spite of strangers who came greedily to skim the cream, and, ignorantly, to make the people over. And so silent and vast and unceasing was the struggle that it seemed to me as though the sleeping earth itself had stirred to cast off the artificial things that lay heavy on it.

The servants had made up a bed of sorts for me in my old room, and I lay down wearily and tried to rest. The place had been so completely stripped of my personal belongings that it looked unfamiliar, and I had no feeling about it until I closed my eyes. I must have dozed, for I remember waking. The singing jet of the old Colonial fountain in my patio was silenced now forever; and it was the shock of absolute stillness that woke me. Somewhere outside a shrub called *huele de noche* was blooming. The heavy sweetness of the night-fragrant flower oppressed me, and I shut my windows to cut it off, but

that did no good; the glass was out of the frames. I fastened the solid wooden shutters, and then the room felt fearfully black and close about me, so that I slipped on a kimono and slippers and escaped out on to the inner gallery that encircled the patio, into a world of illusion.

The courtyard was washed with brilliant moonlight that flowed over the battered walls and ravaged garden, and the heap of plaster and timbers piled in one corner, in a luminous pulsing wave. The moonlight fell on my face and dripped from my fingers, and the whole enclosure seemed filled with liquid motion and quivering life. In that quicksilver light the ruin was transmuted, so that the wreckage and litter looked like the cheerful, promising disorder about a house in the building. It seemed to me I was looking on something half-finished and beautiful, which the eddying moonlight completed. The vision was so clear that it seemed as if a word could fix it in stone. I thought, "It is waiting for someone to make it come true." I thought, with wonder, "I can make it come true. I can bring masons and carpenters and set them to work, and when they see me building, then the others will come back and build, too." I leaned against the pillar trembling with happiness, because it was so beautiful that I, the stranger, should be the one privileged to begin the task of rebuilding.

The three days that followed are vague and dream-like to me as I look back. I remember the sense of urgent hurry that pervaded me, and the eagerness,

and the gradual slackening of all my forces, as if I had been a toy wound up and running down. The only thing that stands out as real is the wonderful smile that was on the face of Guadalupe, the Indian who had run my pottery factory for me, when I found him waiting for me the next morning, standing at the foot of the stairs.

"Lupe!" I cried. Lupe had been my tower of strength in the old days, watching the men in the little factory to see they did not sell choice bits to outsiders, keeping them in order. "King of the village of San Anton" he was called, because of his skill and his handiness in a fight.

"And how are your wife and the children?" I asked. Three of the children had been born at my factory, where Lupe and his wife had lived. He told me all were well except the eldest son, who had been carried off by the enemy. He said, "I heard that you were in town, *señora*, and I have come to serve you and look out for you." And all through the strange two days that followed Lupe was standing ready, day and night, watching over me.

Time has mercifully blotted out the details of the endless consultations I held about rebuilding my hotel. I can see now how the townspeople humored me, listening. I can see that General Pablo González meant to be courteous, but his patience was worn thin with the ineffectiveness of his campaign against Zapata. He had his own obsession, the crushing of his elusive foe in any way he could compass it, and

my obsession wearied him. I remember the moment when his patience snapped.

"This is no time to talk of reconstruction, Señora King! The work of destruction is not yet completed. Will you not comprehend, *señora* — I am about to destroy what still remains of Cuernavaca!" He went on talking, saying that there was no stamping out Zapata because all the towns and villages roundabout sheltered the Zapatistas in their need; so that he was going to sack them all, including Cuernavaca, and thus run his fox into the open. I scarcely heard him.

"But our homes! Our property!" I cried.

"Oh, *señora*!" he said, almost angrily. "That is of the past. That is all over. . . ."

I walked back to the heart of town like one coming out of a daze. I have heard somewhere that when a man is shot whole incidents may flash through his mind with such lightning rapidity that he conceives himself escaping in the interval between the sound of the gun and his falling. Something like that had happened to me. The fatal blow had been struck in the moment I reached the town and knew there was no hope. The past three days had been a fantastic, almost hallucinatory struggle to escape; but that was finished now. I stood in the quiet street and looked at the blackened walls of the Bella Vista and felt I had died along with my valley-nestled home.

I walked on past the gardens and stood on the hill by Cortez's palace where the cobbled street drops swiftly to the *barranca*. I thought, "This is the end

of Rosa King." My life spread out before me like a fan, and I saw how the boundless possibilities of childhood had narrowed and shaped toward this moment; and it seemed as if such a vital, striving life as mine could not stop like this, on a hillside. I looked across the wasted valley to the unchanged beauty of its slopes and the encircling ranks of its protecting mountain ranges. They were strong, steadfast, eternal — but so far away. Rebelliously I called to them, "Are you dead, too?" Then voices came across the valley: voices of Toltecs and Chichimecans from their homes of centuries ago at the feet of the white volcanoes; voices of Tlahuicas from their ancient citadel, Cuauhnáhuac, where they had battled to hold their freedom and their country; voices saying, "The very ruins all about you are telling you we live. Free-born men, like their mountains, will always survive." And the motionless foothills seemed to surge with the shadows of the men I knew lay hiding there, with their rifles and their leader, finding cover and nourishing herbs among the stony ledges.

And then I knew I had not died. It was just that the active, forceful part of me had worn out and been retired from service. I could feel that inside me my faith in creation's plan and humanity's cause still lived. That faith was "I," and always had been.

That was my relation to the Revolution.



CHAPTER XXI

THE trip back to Mexico City was the most terrible I have ever taken on a train. There was no accommodation to be had but a third-class coach on the military train, which meant only hard benches to sit on and dirt everywhere. The passengers were soldiers and their women, and poor people leaving Cuernavaca and trying to go to parts unknown to make some sort of living. We went crawling along until nearly sundown, when we suddenly jerked to a stop. There was excitement on all sides, everyone fearing we had been attacked, or were about to be attacked. Darkness came on, but all the lights were ordered put out. That did not matter much, for it was almost as dark with the small lamps burning as without them; but I think that if anyone had so much as struck a match he would have had a crack on the head for his trouble. There we stopped all night: dirt, animals, chickens, dogs, crying babies, and windows shut tight till break of day, when we were permitted to open them. I was on the point of fainting

when a soldier's woman gave me a little jug of cold coffee. I had eaten nothing since the day before but a few sandwiches.

We learned that the track had been found torn up ahead of our train, and we could take our choice of staying all day in the train, and running the risk of being attacked, or of getting out and walking to a little town where we could get on electric cars that ran to Mexico City. I preferred to walk. How awful it all was! I think I should have dropped on the way if it had not been for the help and kindness of the people walking with me, always saying, "Only a little more, *señora*; only a little more and we shall be there." When we did reach Tlalpam, the little town we were making for, I fell in a dead faint. On coming to, I found a woman forcing brandy down my throat. Even now I shudder when I think of that trip and the sorrow in everything I saw; destruction, ruin, and poverty taking the lead. . . .

"And for what did you go through all this?" said my friends. "What have you gained? Nothing. . . ."

Meanwhile the sacking of Cuernavaca, and of all the towns and villages in Morelos that were in the hands of General Pablo González, went on in the most thorough and heartless manner. All the families living there were put on trains with only as much of their possessions as they could carry in a small pillow-case. Everything else belonging to them was seized,

loaded on trains, and taken to Mexico City to be sold as quickly as possible.

One day I was called on by three men who told me that they had bought all the bathtubs from the Bella Vista. The tubs had been of good American make, and nine had survived the ravages of the Revolution. The men asked me to identify them — not that I was to get them back, but in order that the buyers might be assured of their good quality!

I went to the old warehouse near the station where the stolen goods were kept, and there were the dear old tubs looking at me like deserted friends. When I declared them to be mine and wanted them returned to me, I was carelessly told that "they had been confiscated, as I had deserted my home. . . ."

Every day numbers of the poor people who had been turned out of their homes were sent to Mexico City. It was the rainy season and the torrential rains that poured down every day added to the misery of the refugees. I sent my daughter with baskets of food to the station yards to see if she could find my servants. She found them there in the yards, where they and all the others had been left to get on as best they could; found them sitting cold, wet, hungry, and dazed with all they saw about them — frightened, too, for most of these people had never been on a train before or seen the clanging electric cars that ran in the city streets. My immediate problem was to find work for my former servants, to keep them from starving. Two were most fortunate: Pilar found



TIERRA Y LIBERTAD



GBM

work with the Light and Power Company, thanks to the good offices of George Conway; and for Carlos, another servant who had been with me five years and whom I could recommend, I secured employment with the British Consul. Big Lupe, the fighter, had been carried off by the Federals and forced to become a soldier.

In spite of the ruthlessness of his campaign, General Pablo González was unable to subdue Morelos because he could not capture Zapata. The Federals were equipped with the best artillery, infantry, and cavalry of the times, and their officers were men with the skill that study and training alone can give; but Zapata outwitted them all and would be living to-day if he had not been betrayed by a man who was willing to dishonor the white flag to trap him.

Early in April, 1917, a Federal colonel acting on secret orders from General Pablo González "went over" to the Zapatistas, taking with him six hundred cavalrymen, rapid-firing guns, and ammunition. The villagers of Chinameca complained to Zapata, however, of the cruelties previously inflicted on them by Colonel Guajardo's men — robberies, violent attacks, and murders. To appease the villagers and to win the full confidence of General Zapata, Guajardo separated sixty men from his ranks and had them shot.

On April 17, General Zapata, riding a beautiful horse, the gift of Colonel Guajardo, approached the *hacienda* that the colonel was occupying. Guajardo

himself escorted him, and ten trusted followers. At the entrance of the *hacienda*, Guajardo's troops were ready as if to present arms to General Zapata, and as he entered the gates the cornet gave out three notes of honor. As the last note sounded, and just as General Zapata stepped over the threshold of the door, the guard fired directly at him, killing him instantly. . . .

The body of Zapata was taken to Cuautla, not far from where he was murdered, and publicly exposed so that no one might doubt his death. The dreadful news spread from village to village. The Indians were stunned. They had not believed that Zapata could die.

The despicable treachery of General Pablo González and his tool Guajardo was never pardoned by their companions in arms or by any of the leading men of President Carranza's army. Even those opposed to Emiliano Zapata had recognized in him a quality of selflessness that set him above other men. Vast sums of money had passed through this man's hands and he gave it all to the poor; he was the only leader, perhaps, of whom this might be said. After his death there was no one among his followers who could take his place. His men divided and went to other factions, principally to that of General Alvaro Obregón, in whom they recognized a sincerity akin to that of Zapata. Obregón had turned against Carranza when the president's régime began to take on

airs of the dictatorship the nation had risen to overthrow.

The Revolution dragged on interminably.

We became so accustomed to the unsettled conditions that they did not make much impression on us any more. Curious as it seems, those of us living in the foreign colonies were more excited about what was going on in France, where the World War was drawing to its close, than about the latest developments just around us. We could not afford to think too much about what was going on in Mexico; it was too close to us. After all, we were foreigners and there was nothing we could do to help stabilize the situation; and meanwhile the effects of the long-drawn-out struggle on our personal fortunes were too important and painful to dwell on. Since there was no pushing serious affairs, Mexico City was very gay: a constant round of parties, and war-time balls and benefits of all kinds.

My own history for this period consists of a series of hopeful attempts to reëstablish myself financially, each venture having to be abandoned sooner or later because of my ill-health; and each venture impressing on me more deeply that this phase of my life was over. With it all, Vera and I got along, on a sort of day-to-day basis, sharing in the general gayety. My memories of these years are largely snapshots of good times; but the feeling was always the same with me, and perhaps with most of us, that our little world was

settling deeper and deeper into a bog from which I should not see the release.

So far as I could, I clung to the comparative security of life in the foreign colony. After what I had been through, I had no wish to become involved again in the main current of the Revolution. It was not possible for me to escape the backwash entirely; the turbulence of the times affected all business relations. Then, too, I knew personally many Mexicans deeply involved in the Revolution, and I could not help being concerned for them. All my life I have liked people and wanted them to like me; and it has always seemed to me that while respect and esteem have their place, love and affection are everything. Looking back, I can see that more than anything else it was my friendship which determined the course of my life. It was always through friendship that I got into trouble, and always through friendship that I got out. If I had my life to live over, I should want that to be the same. . . .

On the twenty-sixth of November, 1919, General Felipe Angeles, through whom I had first become involved in Revolutionary affairs, was executed in Chihuahua.

I have always thought that President Carranza might have saved the life of this brave man. England and France both asked that he be spared; but the president was more intent on reorganizing the union of Mexican States, and on bringing recalcitrant leaders

into line, than on looking for personal virtues and military skill in men not in harmony with his own exaltation to power. And so my friend Felipe Angeles was executed.

The night before his death he spoke for two hours in a theatre in Chihuahua which was packed with people who loved and respected him. I have heard from an Englishman who was there how beautifully he spoke, begging his countrymen to be true to Mexico, to cease their strife with one another, and work together for the common good; showing them how the long struggle was exhausting the country and bringing untold suffering to the masses as well as to the irresponsible class against whom the Revolution had been directed.

The next morning he was taken out to be shot. When they placed him against the wall he refused to have the bandage tied over his eyes, and with his own hand gave the signal for the death squad to fire.

Although at the time I did not realize it, this was the dark hour before the dawn.

Looking back, I can see how the chaos of the Revolution was even then shaking down; how the militaristic leaders were being replaced by men who were more than soldiers, men with the kind of genius needed to translate into practical, working reforms the ideals of the Revolution for which the way had been cleared. The task of creating a stable, peace-time order on the new democratic basis had been im-

perfectly begun by President Carranza. Now it fell into the hands of Alvaro Obregón and Plutarco Elias Calles, the two men ideally suited to accomplish it.

With growing confidence we watched these men take hold. We saw revolt and friction being ironed out; saw the problem of military plot and counter-plot receding to second place, as the government turned its attention to the giant's job of filling an empty treasury, protecting the national resources from the commercial vampires, and carrying out the revolutionary provisions of the Reform Constitution. It was a wonderful thing to me to see the rights of the *peones* sustained in the courts, the workers safeguarded against exploitation. Schools were built. The government launched a tremendous educational campaign, of the magnitude needed to fit for citizenship, in this day and age, a people the vast majority of whom could not read or write, and many of whom spoke only their regional dialect and did not know the national language. Even to-day, when I see the bright-faced school children putting on a programme of songs and dances on a feast day, I cannot help thinking with a kind of marveling joy, "These are the people they said had no capacity!" . . .

Much has been said against the new régime. I hear it from my friends, the reactionaries who long for the good old days of Porfirio Díaz, when they themselves were better off than they are now; and the sentimentalists, who would have progress with-

out paying the price. But they do not see through my eyes. I am still a foreigner, an Englishwoman. But after the sufferings I shared with the people of my town, I cannot be a stranger to Mexicans. Whatever happens, I am on their side. What is for their good, I want. Perhaps it is because this progress has already cost me all I had that I am not afraid of it, and of what it might do to me. Nothing which could happen to me personally could make up for what I suffered: it is only in the belief that my neighbors are better off for the storm that broke me that I am reconciled. I am aware of the blunders of the new régime, of the frailty of some of its partisans; but these things do not bother me much. When, amid all the enormous practical difficulties that complicate the agrarian question, I see steps taken toward restoring their ancient lands to the Indians, it seems to me that the dreams for which Madero and Zapata died are arduously converting themselves into realities.

More than to anyone else, the stability and success of the new régime have been due to the genius of Plutarco Elias Calles. Mexico to-day is not only faced with the same problems that beset the rest of the world; she has still clinging to her skirts problems long since dismissed in England and the United States to the north. The gravest problem that faces all democracies, that of leading the people in the direction of their own greatest good, is particularly difficult in Mexico. The voting public shades from

the primitive Yaquis of the desert to the super-civilized intellectuals of the capital; and white, *mestizo* (mixed), and Indian are broad terms which do not begin to express the subtle racial differences and antagonistic backgrounds of the people. It seems to me that everyone must respect the grandeur of the man who can dominate these diverse elements and inspire them to work together. With intuitive sympathy, Calles has addressed himself to the one motive they all have in common: the urge to develop from the inside a Mexican culture.

Meanwhile the people of the nation were flocking back to their homes in the wasted districts, and the rebuilding of the towns and villages was begun. After my tragic experience in 1916, going to and returning from Cuernavaca, I felt I should never wish to see again the town I had loved so much. But as time went on I found myself listening for news of Cuernavaca, trying to piece together the bits friends told me. They said the people had come back, and the ruined houses were being built up again, quickly.

In 1923 I went down from Mexico City to see for myself how it was; and after that I visited often in Cuernavaca. There was no question of my staying and attempting to rebuild my business. My health was completely shattered, and what I had gone through had made me unfit for anything that required exertion or careful thought. Besides, I had lost everything I had. The Bella Vista had passed into the hands of another owner, who rebuilt

the hotel; but it is not now the same as when I had it.

Each time I went to Cuernavaca I was surprised to see the vast improvement in the little city. Both Federals and Zapatistas had spared the ancient churches, and the massive stone palace of Cortez had been too durable and too useful to both sides to be destroyed; so that when the ruined houses and shops began to build up again the town seemed much as it had been—if one did not look closely.

I was making my home at this period with my children, but the high altitudes where they lived overtaxed my weakened heart, and I missed the warm, flooding sunshine of Morelos, and the starlight over the white volcanoes. I missed the old associations. . . . My daughter and son were grown up and married. I suspected they were old enough to get along by themselves, without my fond maternal eye. . . .

In 1928 I said to them, "These places may be home to you; but I am going back to live in Cuernavaca, where I belong."



EPILOGUE

IT has been thirty years since first I came to Cuernavaca — three decades of life; years that, with the exception of the revolutions in which I was caught, have dealt kindly with me.

To-day I sit on that same verandah I knew so well in the days when Cuernavaca echoed and reechoed with the sound of soldiery — men mad with triumph, and other men running for their lives from the bullets that destroyed, for the time at least, all that was beautiful in this quaint town nestled in the Valley of Morelos. It is late on a Sunday afternoon, and the holiday throngs who motored down from Mexico City for a lazy week-end are starting back across the mountains. They sweep in like a tide and out again, the great and near-great of the capital, enjoying a few hours of delicious relaxation in our fountain-cooled, flower-splashed patios, then back again to the press of affairs.

Across the street from my rocking-chair the Indian men of Morelos peacefully promenade by the side of



SLEEPING WOMAN



dark-eyed maidens, while a band plays the melodies of Mexico—the strange, weird tempos of tribal dances, the harmony now and then disturbed by snatches of popular airs of the day.

Sunset brings the end of another day. Multicolored birds seek their nests; the reds, blues, and purples of flowers fade slowly into the color of night. The brilliance of blossoms has vanished with the day. In the morning it will come again—more brilliant, more vivid; and the birds once more will sing the songs they have sung through the centuries.

Night shadows creep softly toward me; the great trees in the plaza across the way become fantastic shapes in the first blackness of the night. Then, suddenly, the lights of the city flash on. Tiny specks of brilliant white are everywhere.

I watch the endless promenade in the plaza. It is all going on—forward. Only my thoughts go backward over the trail of time, to the days when first I knew this restful, peaceful town. . . . Out of the mist of memories come half-forgotten faces—faces of people long dead or long since lost sight of, and the youthful ghosts of some still my friends. Faces and facts come crowding to my mind which have played no part in what I have just written; and then, more deeply etched, come the faces of those whose friendship wrote the story recounted here: Helene Pontipirani, that wild girl who left misery and suffering behind her from the time she left her parents' home—her overpassionate heart stopped suddenly

and is at peace; Huerta, the murderer, who was good to me — dead, I have heard, of his dissipations in a prison at Fort Bliss, Texas; Felipe Angeles — executed, as I have told, at Chihuahua, and his beautiful wife, my dear friend, dead also, as she had wished to be. She, who had dreaded life without her husband, lay ill in New York when the news of his death came; and the shock killed her. . . . Federico Chacón came through unscathed, his bravery and wonderful smiles bringing him safely through endless adventures, till the Revolution was over and he could return to his family in the north. . . .

So my mind wanders back through the years. I compare the Mexico of a quarter of a century ago with the Mexico of to-day, and cannot help but feel that these revolutions through which I managed to live were inevitable — the very foundation stones on which this present-day republic has been built. A horrible thought, when one considers the killed and wounded, the orphan children and destitute women and girls; but strong nations the world over have been built on the ruins of a just revolt.

Then comes another thought, another comparison between yesterday and to-day. I think of the State of Morelos, and particularly of Cuernavaca, as it was when I first came here. Again I see the dark and dirty market places of those early days; heavily laden beasts of burden belabored over rough and hilly roads; filth-lined gutters where drainage or anything else could run, as the city's water supply.

Now, to-day, as I look about me, I find only peace and sweet repose: a small city, more than four centuries old, but modern in its methods — market places clean and well lighted, a pure and bountiful water supply, streets not only clean but neat. There dare not be a speck of refuse anywhere, for the time-worn winding streets are constantly patrolled by uniformed policemen. And best of all, I see the evidences of a fine new pride in race and ancestry on the part of my neighbors. On the stone walls of Cortez's palace are painted now the heroic, dark-skinned Tlahuicas in their war masks of wolves and *tigres*, who died defending this valley; and opposite them, Diego Rivera has set the slender, strong figure of Zapata, who won back the land for the people.

My thoughts come back to the music in the plaza across the way, to the clean-garbed youths and laughing maidens by their side. I sigh . . . a sigh that be-speaks not the black clouds of bygone years, but a sigh of content for the bright skies ahead — in the days, in the years, in the centuries, that are still to come to Cuernavaca.

